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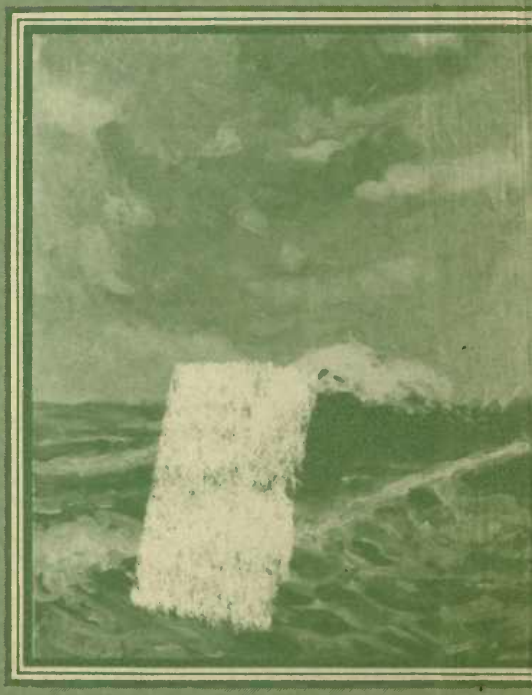

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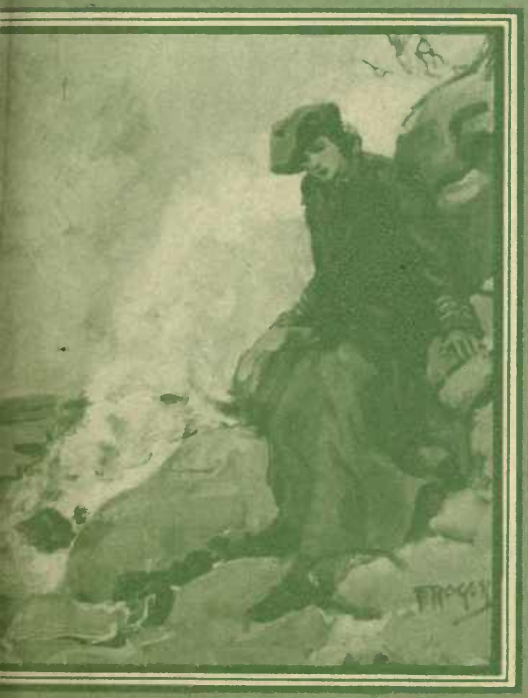

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BY

ETHELYN LESLIE HUSTON

Irresponsible motherhood is always a sin, with or without marriage. Responsible motherhood is always sacred, with or without marriage. —ELLEN KEY.

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TO X

Out of the storm your soul I found,
The crag holding back the sea,
And close to its crest I dared to rest
A moment, thankfully.

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They were lonely! With sardonic humor Destiny herded them together in one million, two, three—swarming in soul-stifling confusion. And out of that fearful, struggling mass there steadily boiled the green froth of crime bred of loneliness!

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THE TOWERS OF ILIUM

CHAPTER ONE

AS the straw of immemorial times has always indicated where blows the wind, so incidents of seeming trivial importance in the life of a child have often in them coming history writ large for those who have eyes and can see.

It was therefore a significant occasion when a thoroughly estimable young Sunday School teacher undertook, upon a certain mild and peaceful Sabbath, to impress upon her class in general, and upon little June Ferriss in particular, the meaning and importance of infant baptism.

Until that particular Sabbath, the Sabbaths known to June were indicative of new shoes and clothes. Sunday School was a bright and cheerful place where little boys and girls with exceptionally clean faces appeared in an ever-fascinating round of these delightful articles of wear. Of course there were estimable young women, and also young men, who explained things from the Bible and who gave them estimable little books for Christmas presents. But the Bible explanations savoured rather strongly of Hans Christian Andersen's tales, without being as interesting, while the little books were always about good little girls and boys whom they never seemed to meet in their own schools, so the little books were not interesting at all. Also the very good little girls and boys frequently died young, promising to

meet their weeping relations in Heaven and quoting a verse from a favourite hymn. And somehow this sad and beautiful fate never seemed to appeal to the members of that particular Sunday School that little June Ferriss attended.

So, in consequence of all this, as already related, the new shoes and clothes carried the glory and greatness of the Seventh day, with no complexities, theological nor fictional, to mar the recurrent excitement and pleasure they gave.

On the Sabbath that witnessed the blowing of the first significant straw, where June's attitude toward life was concerned, that young person sat sideways on a low bench, facing her teacher, but with eyes absently fixed on the two trim bows that tied the two trim pigtails of the little girl who sat next to her. In those days the low benches for each class were arranged in a hollow square, which the teacher faced from one side, and the pupils on the right and left sat with heads respectfully turned at attention, if with thoughts that were prone to wander among matters of earthly vanities.

June's thoughts were on the colour of the trim bows, which was cherry and therefore ravishing. Her own bows were pink, and she had considered them completely soul-satisfying till the warmth of the cherry ribbon crossed her line of vision as the class finished the opening hymn and sat down on their little benches for the lesson. Rose-pink or cherry colour! June's universe rocked dizzily while the pleasant monotone of the young teacher rippled along in an undisturbing obbligato. Cherry colour? June pictured it on her own dark brown curls—warm—glowing——

"So you must remember, children," she subconsciously was aware that the obbligato was saying, "that baptism

is necessary, and that if a little baby dies without being baptised, it cannot go to Heaven. Isn't that sad? And that is why——"

The obligato trailed back into its undisturbing murmur while the cherry ribbons blurred and cleared and blurred again. Little babies? Very little babies even! Unbaptised—the gates of pearl, and the nice little chubby angels like those on the baptismal font, and the vague but authentic wonders of the Heavenly Kingdom —all denied them!

June's gaze wrenched itself from the cherry-coloured bows to the mildly solemn face of the earnest young obligato, and she found voice.

"Teacher—you mean if a little baby's mamma and papa do not get it baptised, and it dies, and just because they don't, it cannot go to Heaven?" she asked haltingly.

"Yes, that is what I mean," said the obligato in great sorrow.

June's eyes, dark, wide, plunged into the teacher's eyes the probe of questioning, new-born, white-hot, keenly sensitive as the needle that quivers and gropes through storm-currents for the far magnetic call of its star. *"Yes, that is what I mean"*—out of the running obligato her question had struck this reply, words that dripped on her waking consciousness as an acid that blisters and stains and poisons—Little babies—very little babies even—and all because some grown people neglected——!

June started as the acid reached its point of fire to her soul. Her Sunday Lesson Leaf slipped from her fingers to the floor as she crushed forward to stare beyond the cherry bows at the Sunday School teacher.

Her world rocked sickeningly as the infallibility of

grown-ups swayed back and forth in unseemly fashion, a horrid and unthinkable thing. Then her mouth went dry and gritty, and with lips that twitched with the surprise of it, with voice hoarse and unchildlike, June made answer—"I don't believe it!"

CHAPTER TWO

SOMEWHAT earlier in the life of June that young person had arisen one morning in a rather fractious mood and things generally seemed to go wrong. Sitting on the floor where she was changing her small slippers for shoes, June sputtered impatiently over a refractory lace.

"Dear me, June," Mrs. Ferriss said reprovingly. "You must have left your bed wrong foot first this morning, you are so cross. What makes you so naughty?"

"Oh, of torse I'se naughty!" retorted Miss June, tugging at a lace viciously. "When chilluns is tross, dey'se naughty. But when *drown* folks is tross, it's *nerveses!*"

The withering emphasis of this statement left Mrs. Ferriss speechless and June bitterly mistress of the situation. There was no room for argument. Nerveses? Like the mantling cloak of charity, what sins of commission and omission have they not covered! Nerves and naughtiness—between them, who dares place the line of demarcation?

And June, it will be seen, analysed. She declined to merely accept. Which gave evidence to those who had ears and could hear that June's pathway from the cradle to the grave would be interesting. Those who do not analyse, drift, and they are the philosophers. But they do not make history. They just fill in the background.

James Ferriss married Dolly Morton when he was twenty-four and she eighteen. She was very pretty, with eyes and lips that laughed easily, and that is about

all that twenty-four requires of its bride. Thirty-four found James Ferriss with a comfortable law practice and a growing library. Mrs. Ferriss at twenty-eight had achieved maturity without character, and the law practice represented to her merely the source of the wherewithal for household bills, while the library represented nothing at all.

June was the only child and was an observant young person who was able to express herself freely, but who did not always express herself fully. Like most children, she was acutely sensitive to the condition of the home atmosphere. This is something grown people forget, and they spell out words mysteriously to each other, ostrich-fashion, believing that the meaning is quite carefully hidden, while all the time the small pitcher has no need of ears—her eyes and heart and nerves are branding their impression with little hot needles on her memory.

And June's hyper-sensitive mind was recording faithfully and steadily the strange and complex manners of grown folks. In the first place, the father whom she regarded as all wisdom and knowledge, and whom she loved with all of her fast-deepening mind as well as heart, had a fashion of retreating into himself and a book with lips sternly set, while Mrs. Ferriss busied herself with the affairs of her household with a steely glint in her eye and an acrid note in the laugh that had once rung musically in her husband's ears.

These barometric conditions June responded to with the fidelity of the little quivering needle of the compass—whirling affrightedly as the air became electrically surcharged, but held upon the pivot known and reverenced as the sacredness of the home.

In the presence of the child James Ferriss and his

wife never descended to the vulgarity of a quarrel. Both believed that the outward courtesies carefully observed, the allusions elaborately veiled, passed with their daughter unquestioned. That her ear detected the hollow ring of spurious coin and that her soul shrank from a discordance that bewildered and hurt never occurred to them.

But if she made no sign that she was observant, the eternal query that stretches over all life laid hold upon her but the more tenaciously. Like Ferriss himself, she retreated into herself and questioned and wrestled mightily with the problems that unfolded grimly before her fascinated vision. Her father was all wisdom, but he was not happy. So then even wise people were not able to find happiness. Her mother was very good, because she went to church and kept the commandments and severely criticised other women who were prone to be light-minded and frivolous and less heedful of the weekday convenances and Sunday ceremonials. But she was not happy, either, so even good people did not find happiness.

What, then, would give happiness?

She asked the minister once when she was visiting her grandparents and he was invited to Sunday dinner.

"What do people do to be happy?" he said in reply to her question. "Why, if you are good and do unto others as you would they would do unto you—that will make you happy."

Then after dinner her playmate called for her to go for a walk because it was a glorious spring day and they could gather pussy-willows and talk about what they would do and wear on Commencement Day and exchange those delightful girl-confidences that are so

thrillingly and absorbingly interesting to chums of all ages. But her mother stopped her.

"We are going for a drive and you may go with us," she said.

So the chum went to call for another little girl and June got her hat and light jacket and went down to the carriage block to wait for Bess and Dandy to dance up with their jingling harness. And when they came, she fed them clumps of tender young grass while some of the grown folks settled themselves in the surrey and exchanged pleasant banter with the others grouped on the lawn and veranda.

Then as June patted Dandy and kissed Bess on her soft nose and danced back to the side of the carriage, it was discovered that there was no room for her.

"It's too crowded for you, June," her mother said carelessly. "Wait, mother, till I fasten your veil. That is better. Let us take the lake road—it will be beautiful to-day. Good-bye, everybody! Have tea at five-thirty—we will be hungry after driving. Good-bye!"

Gay good-byes were exchanged and the party drove away, leaving a fluffy cloud of dust drifting and glinting in the sunshine. The old grandfather and maiden aunt on the veranda turned to go upstairs for a peaceful Sabbath nap. Stillness—the appalling, endless stillness of a sleeping house and long Sunday afternoon hung like a pall over the child coming slowly back up the broad veranda steps.

Her chum was gone—it was too late to follow her. And the house party had gone, laughing and indifferent, after spoiling her day, and had left her alone. And the long, long afternoon, with its sleepy drone of bees and lazy twitter of birds, stretched out before her in the

exaggerated perspective of youth which sees no horizon anywhere.

Something rose in her throat choking her, and a hot sting of tears in her eyes blurred the gay sunshine that mocked her. But the little life of self-discipline had already schooled her in keeping her hurts to herself, and she pressed her twitching lips hard together as she tried to slip past the sharp eyes of her elders. Aunt Fanny, however, correct and active in good works, saw an opening to plant seed and said reprovingly:

"Little girls shouldn't be sulky—grown people know what is best and children should be obedient and cheerful."

Obedient and cheerful! June darted past the hard, sharp eyes, down through the old-fashioned halls to the back stairway, up two flights to a landing where the stairs led to the attic, and then she crouched at a low window whose broad sill was almost level with the floor.

On her occasional visits to her mother's people this was her favorite retreat. In the attic were boxes of magazines, *Bow Bells* and *Godey's* and other periodicals found in polite and conservative homes. And June, regarded as odd and a little alarming by her aunt and grandparents, was always glad to get away from the handkerchief-hemming and lace-crocheting that they considered proper occupation and relaxation for young fingers and minds, and to curl up on the window ledge with an armful of yellowing books over which she dreamed contentedly.

From the stilted and artificial stories her thoughts would sometimes wander to the lives and problems around her that somehow seemed so much more sharply etched against the background of daily life than the

mildly interesting things in the stories. The story heroines faded pathetically away into early graves, unless they lived to wander sadly in lonely gardens at dusk, and to pray to the stars with pearly tears streaming from their eyes.

But around her June did not see these people so familiar in fiction, and so her gaze very often wandered in puzzled fashion to the waving tops of the maple trees that swept softly against the window ledge where she crouched. And over the trees to the drifting banks of clouds massing in wonderful fairy palaces against the blue sky she lifted her eyes in grave questioning.

Why were grown people so odd in their ways with each other? They were very often unkind and very often unjust—as to-day, for instance. They had taken from her the little junketing with Kitty Adams that she had looked forward to with enjoyment, and they seemed quite indifferent to the spoiling of her day. And then when she had tried bravely to hide her disappointment and her tears, she had been told that "little girls must not be sulky."

Her father would have understood, if he had been there—he always understood, and straightened out all manner of tangled threads for her in his quiet, clever fashion. But he did not seem able to do anything with his own tangled threads, and June's level brows drew together in helpless puzzlement. What was the use of being grown up and able to do wonderful things that children could not do if so many things were wrong and so many people were unkind and unfair to other people?

To "do unto others"—would she spoil a day for her mother and leave her alone while she drove gaily away with a laughing group of people? Would she reprove Aunt Fanny for being "sulky" if she saw her lips

quivering and tears fighting hard to brim over? And if grown people did not know how to "do unto others" and find happiness that way, who would know and tell her?

June hugged her knees and watched a wild canary teetering happily on a high, slender bough that waved in the wind. The small-feathered fleck of gold dipped and fluttered among the flickering leaves and made a dainty, vividly alive picture of joy and freedom.

Very high up against the fathomless blue a great dark bird poised on wide, still wings, swaying now and then in indolent curves, again resting with motionless grace on the unseen shoulders of the wind.

Swaying boughs and flower-scented wind, great grey eagle, fleck of feathered gold—the life and joy of free things all there framed by the low attic window, called to the girl groping in the maze of human standards and formulas. They were free, the trees and the birds and the winds. There was no one to say they must go or they must stay. Just the voices of Life spoke in their hearts and bid them live and enjoy. And so they danced and swayed in exultant rhythm and perfect harmony, though held in unison only by the joyousness that pulsed from sky to earth, from earth to sky.

The wind and the eagle—they were never tired. But her father was tired, always. The birds that dipped and skimmed through the trees, the butterflies that hovered like living flowers over the flowers of the garden—there was nothing about these that suggested whatever it was that caused that acrid little laugh of her mother's. Nature was always beautiful, even when the storms swept across the face of the earth twisting the trees in their cruel clutches and lashing the roses as with whips. There was something mighty and grand and solemn

about the storms, and they always fascinated June in just the same way as the vibrant thunder of a great pipe-organ fascinated her when she listened to it in the dimness of a vaulted church.

Storms were part of Nature and belonged to natural things that June could trust, somehow, even if she could not understand. But the hundred little bitternesses of daily life, the shade that settled grimly upon her father's lips, the sting that made itself felt in some simple words of her mother, the cold criticism and curt condemnation by her grandparents and her aunt of offending neighbour or unsuspecting friend—these chafed and prickled on her inner consciousness till the restless misery of it was as real as the hair shirt of a penitent on the protesting skin.

And why was it? Why were people cross with other people? If to be wise, as her father was wise, or to be strict and good, as her mother was both, were the desired things that she was taught that they were, then what was wrong?

When company came to the house Mr. Ferriss would seem to grow younger and June would respond joyfully to the spirit of the light-hearted banter with which he made the day or evening pass so quickly and pleasantly for their guests. But there was always a day strange and strained to follow that June learned to dread.

Her mother, smiling and attentive while the guests were there, was cold and queer after, with the occasional stinging speeches that seemed to mean so much more than the mere spoken words. And June would see the light-hearted man of the night before grow grave and silent and old. If there were ladies who were pretty and interesting that came to visit them, June, who loved handsome people and quick wit, would hope fervently

that they would come often so that she could admire and study them, as well as enjoy the laughing repartee of Mr. Ferriss in answer to their gay raillery.

But they never came more than two or three times, and June kept her disappointment to herself. Her mother did not like them, she could see that, and June grew to understand that the stinging little speeches and the acrid laugh represented that which must be propitiated with gifts and sacrifices, like the idols to whom the heathen gave their treasures. And as her father laid his manhood in uncomplaining silence on this altar, so the daughter contributed her quota.

Major events in one's history are rarely heralded with trumpets. Destiny is not melodramatic. She is as subtle in her methods as is a Mrs. Fiske or Madame Janauschek or Madame Bernhardt. The silences of these remarkable women transcend all eloquence. When the story of the drama twists the keys abruptly into tense expectancy and a gesture or a sigh must play upon taut nerves with a touch that means tragic perfection or bathos, the tenebrae of emotion or dramatic disaster—the artistry of those players reaches with psychic carefulness to just the muteness, just the stillness, that should give pause before the word that is the keynote, the sentence that is the crux of the story itself.

The calm is pregnant with a something that is coming, the peace is ominous, the immeasurable fear of the unknown broods over things that cower and listen. And across the silence, the word that has been waited for cuts at last with the hushed, terrible vividness of heat lightning.

Fright, clamour and chaos—they are as hounds in full cry, the sensations unleashed and possessed of hysteria and madness. But tragedy is still. It gathers the gamut

of sound into a whisper and the whisper shivers down to the gates of doom.

And so it was that on a certain spring day that was as vividly beautiful as a Turner, with that artist in his happiest mood, June paused at the edge of womanhood and brushed elbows with death.

Returning from a week-end with a particularly congenial house-party, Mr. Ferriss was sending their motor car forward at a good clip while the drearily familiar programme was enacted. The aftermath of all their pleasurings was no longer a mystery to June Ferriss. And now she sat in her corner of the smoothly gliding car, wishing in futile rebellion that she could put her fingers in her ears.

Ferriss watched the road ahead, with its ever-changing vista, in silence. His wife discussed the women of the house party, his attitude toward them and their attitude toward him. She weighed and dissected, and punctuated the process with the little acrid laugh that rasped on the nerves of the girl like a file. And as the afternoon sky gathered into itself colourings and glories that flooded the earth and the trees and the waters with supernatural beauty, the human comedy trailed out its drab and wearying length. The irritation of its trivialities seemed to wear on the girl, forced to listen to them, more than ever before, and she sat up with quick relief as they swung around a curve of the street and their own home came into view.

Then a deafening report struck her ear-drums like a mighty hammer and a crash followed, in which earth and sky swept together.

CHAPTER THREE

WHEN June's eyes opened she saw the comforting walls of her own room. A strange young woman in uniform came and bent over her, holding a glass to her lips. As she drank the sweetish-bitter potion, her wheeling wits began to steady and she remembered.

"We smashed, didn't we?—Father—what of him? And my mother?"

The nurse looked speculatively into her patient's face. She saw there the charm and delicacy of youth, but she saw also a strength that youth does not often have—the strength of youth that has looked at the facts of life as well as played with the fancies.

"Your father will live, but he is unconscious. Your mother is alive——"

She paused and June said, after a minute:

"My mother is going to die, you mean?"

The trite, professional compromise on "While there is life" rose mechanically to the lips of the nurse, but the strangely steady eyes and quiet voice checked the words. Her own steady nerves did homage to a steadiness she recognised fraternally, and in her tone was grave respect.

"She is dying—yes."

She was dying and the suspicious eyes would not trouble them with their suspicious watching any more. The thin, mocking voice, the hard, light laugh with its little significant sneer—those would be still for always and for always. The surveillance that had kept step like a shadow with every step of James Ferriss for all

the years of his married life would keep step no longer. He would be free to go or to come, and no one would question.

Death was but the step across a shadowy threshold, the continuing of life freed of the burden of the flesh. That was the only difference, so taught the churches. Yet James Ferriss would be quite free to talk with whom he pleased—to love and to woo and to marry if he desired. And it would be all quite all right and no one could criticise, much less condemn.

But for long years his ordinary civilities had been watched and his careless pleasantries turned against him as sins. His every-day life was scrutinised, and he was suspected and cross-examined and judged. He was a bond-slave who must give an accounting, a serf who must say "Yay, yay" or "Nay, nay" only when and to whom he was permitted.

If marriage gave this right, why should the shedding of the flesh make such a tremendous difference? If that spirit that had judged him so relentlessly was to still live, why was its authority less just because it changed its outer vesture?

When June, assisted by the doctor and the nurse, was taken into the room where her mother lay, she felt a new sense of pity stir in her breast for the helpless woman on the bed. If she knew she was dying, what must her thoughts be? Did she realise how she had claimed him to the exclusion of every one else? Was she sorry for the absorption that she had insisted upon? Was she seeing now the futility of it?—the mistake she had made and the evil she had wrought?

It is said that clearness of sight comes with the approach of death, so was it not probable that the long, miserable years were passing in review before the

dimming eyes and that they saw at last the mockery of her dominion whose fiercest tyranny falls helpless when its iron clutch seeks to grasp the impalpable, when the mental withdraws into its stronghold to which neither priest nor magistrate can give a key!

It seemed that something of all this must have been in the mind of Dora Ferriss, for she turned eager eyes on her daughter and beckoned to her weakly but imperatively.

"I want to see your father, June. He is conscious and they can wheel him in on a couch. I must see him—I am dying and I must speak to him—there is something I must say to him—I must—I must——!"

June, ill and unnerved, felt a pang of remorse that sent the hot tears welling to her eyes. It was the woman-heart that spoke that must have been hidden under the censorious and bitter wife they had known who had worn their patience so threadbare. She was repentant, poor, dying thing!—and she could not go out to the darkness and what lay beyond till she had made her peace. At all costs, this must be granted her. And June stretched out her hands to the physician:

"We must take the risk—oh, we cannot refuse!"

Her voice broke, and the doctor's beetling eyebrows lifted, together with his broad shoulders. The shrug was consent very much under protest, and he turned grimly to the nurse.

"She will have it so! Come on, Nurse Davis."

June moved to the side of the bed and took the impatient hand in hers as the others left the room.

"They will bring him, mother," she said gently. "Be patient and do not try to talk. Save your strength till he comes."

The thin, once pretty face on the pillow was drawn

and tense. The eyes, ignoring June, feverishly watched the door. And an intense eagerness seemed to flood the maimed body with new strength as a couch bearing the injured man was wheeled carefully through the doorway and up beside the bed.

Mr. Ferriss, though conscious, was in a condition of extreme weakness, and the nurse at a scowling glance from the doctor held a glass of stimulant to the white lips. After a moment of anxious silence the heavy eyelids lifted and Mrs. Ferriss called him sharply.

The physician—Dr. Moore, who had been in attendance on the family for years—swallowed an exclamation, then set his lips grimly and strode to the window.

"James!"

At the second call Mr. Ferriss turned his gaze slowly till it met that of his wife. June, leaning against the foot of the bed in an agony of anxiety, saw the dying woman pull herself over on her elbows, where, half supported by the nurse, she looked down at her husband.

"They say I am going to die," she said gaspingly. "Jim, I want you to say something—you must, or I can't die satisfied. Jim——!"

June, looking from her mother's straining eyes to the face of the man on the couch, set like a waxen mask and shadowed by the wing of unconsciousness that hovered over him, clutched the foot-board of the bed while a wordless prayer choked up from heart to throat. That he might answer—that he might only answer and forgive——!

"Jim!" the difficult, gasping voice grew hoarse, sibilant. "Jim!—promise me—promise me that you will never marry any other woman! Do you hear?—Promise me—you must promise. I am dying, and you can't

refuse a dying person. Promise that you won't! I can't stay in my grave if you do! I will come back and haunt you—I will! Promise!—Promise!"

With an inarticulate cry of horror, June sprang forward and with her two hands on her mother's shoulders, she thrust her back and down on the bed.

"Be silent! Be silent!"

It was a choking whisper, hoarse, furious, and it silenced the thin, clamouring voice, and Mrs. Ferriss lay still, panting horribly. June turned to the doctor and nurse and motioned them to the couch.

"Take him away—quick!"

The couch rolled easily and swiftly out of the room as the girl stood guard between it and the bed, and as the two wheeling it disappeared, she turned back. Her mother's mouth was open, the breath coming in strangled puffs from her lips, and her eyes were fixed in a malevolent glare on her daughter.

"I hate you! I hate——!" A fleck of foam bubbled up to the grey lips, then the jaw relaxed.

June took a napkin from the stand by the bed and laid it over the face, closing down the eyelids. Straightening up, she found Dr. Moore beside her and they looked at each other without speaking.

CHAPTER FOUR

PRESENTLY a strange little smile twisted the girl's lips as she looked down at the long, motionless form on the bed and then back at the man standing grimly beside her.

"Wifehood and motherhood—and now death." With a little gesture she indicated the dead woman. "We hear a good deal about the dignity of all three, do we not?"

Her lips held their smile and her eyes were only quietly reflective, but the physician, watching keenly from under the grizzled thatch that met across his hawk-like nose, brought his hand down roughly on her shoulder.

"Damn it all, June, try and forget this beastly business. You are young yet—too young by twenty years to go probing at the rotten skeleton that life is built on. This part of it is over. Blot it out, girl. Start new, and go back to the garden and the butterflies."

She laughed, and the dreary cadence of it marked the long, long way that she had travelled from youth's garden and its butterflies. Go back? The garden of her youth had been a very small garden, and the butterflies—were they butterflies? or only wisps of painted paper kept fluttering by the little Japanese fan of a child's imaginings!

Go back? What had she to go back to? How often had memory trod that painful way back to babyhood, to then turn and pick up the significant things that she had known so well and the more significant ones that she had never known!

The little earlier griefs that appealed to indifferent ears, the childish errors that met the sting of satire, the blight of critical sarcasm—these she remembered in a blurred patchwork of pain and shame that had taught her very soon the wisdom of keeping her perplexities and sorrows to herself.

And what she had never known was the wisely gentle camaraderie, the infinite patience and understanding of which motherhood is known as the highest type.

"Was there ever a garden, I wonder?" she said. And the voice, quietly dispassionate, fell with grave finality across the flow of generalities that the physician endeavoured to make convincing.

"But after all, she was your mother, you know," Dr. Moore had said with a last desperate stand for the household altars.

"She was my mother? She gave me birth—yes. But what does that prove? Mother and child? Why, we were not even friends! She bore me, the daughter of my father. I have her skin, her features. But that is all. Beyond the mark of the flesh, we had nothing in common. We were strangers."

She spoke without emotion, merely stating facts that were evident with the quiet interest she would give any problem of Nature that appealed to the analytical side of her. And she stated, as she knew, facts that were uncontrovertible to a man of his profession.

Motherhood, fatherhood and the marital relation, to those of his cloth, had few of the embellishments that smothered the framework for that great majority who are satisfied with outward pomp. All life has so much of the carnival parade in it. The decorated floats with their symbolic tableaux quite satisfy eyes that are accustomed to the surface of things. That is why the

dreams of socialist and reformer are so impossible of fulfilment. There are always leaders, because there are always the few whose eyes are clear and shrewd, who see at once the power and the weakness of their fellows and who play upon the latter and utilise the former for their own purpose.

The purpose is not always bad nor is it always good. But it is a little lever that is always personal, that answers to the command of one brain.

And those of the medical fraternity, more than those of any other vocation, lay down their illusions very early at the foot of knowledge. If they see the beauty and poetry of life, if they see the trim and respectable little idols that are ranged on the orthodox altars that civilisation has evolved, they see also the decay that beauty masks; the raw tragedy that poetry drapes; the priests, ordained and secular, from the market place, who are concealed back of the altars and who pull the wires and speak through the altars' gods.

Motherhood, in theory so divine, they knew to be in fact appallingly complex and material. For motherhood, that should be the third of the divine trinity when linked with wifehood and fatherhood, was but too often the physical fruitage of expediency. Wifehood—too often the fair sepulchre builded over dead hope and dead desire, answered for so much! For the one who enters into it with joy and wears its glory as a halo, how many who use it for the makeshift—for the swarm of ignoble considerations that run their bargaining from the penny calculations of the weary and drab-lived shop-girl, to the princely settlements of ducal houses? This they call wifehood—this legalised living together of two beings, man and woman, who far from being mated, one

with the other, are fortunate, if tolerance does not sink, of its own drear chain-weight, to hate.

And of this sort of union the world bred its wanted and unwanted children. Of this sort of union women bore their kind—the offspring of soulless submission at best, too often of soul-revolt and loathing where Nature battled in sick protest against outrage.

CHAPTER FIVE

AN island, long, low and narrow and oddly like a lizard in outline, lay in the warm sunlight as though lazily resting on the waters before the City. It separated the wide bay from the lake, forming a natural harbour, and the great lake steamers swung in at either end through what was called the "Eastern gap" and the "Western gap."

The irregular skyline of the City shone through its thin, smoky haze and the big squat ferry boats lumbered slowly back and forth between the city piers and the Island, bringing city folk for an afternoon in the pretty Island Park and bringing the Islanders themselves from brief shopping trips, taken largely to enjoy anew the delight of getting back again to the Island quiet and its brisk, cool lake breezes.

Some of the lazy ferry boats headed for one end of the Island, where a big summer hotel presided proudly, if a little blatantly, over all sorts of summer attractions. Toy railroads, chutes, refreshment places and sideshows radiated around the broad galleried hotel, flags fluttered and bands played.

Beyond the immediate amusement radius lay a summer colony of bungalows and camps. Here lived the summer Islanders who wanted Nature generously sprinkled with the paprika of the City. They want the strident shriek of the Carrousel, the megaphone bellow of the sideshow, the blare of the brass band and the shouts and cries of the bathing toboggan slide.

The "Point" where these joys abounded was Coney

on a less expansive, but quite as noisy scale. And as Manhattan Beach holds itself in haughty seclusion far apart from its loud-voiced and over-decorated neighbour, so the Island Park region kept the barrier of a long and practically impassable stretch of barren sand between its outlying bungalows and cabins and the thickly clustered, linked-elbow campers of the Point.

Along the far-reaching lagoons that threaded the Island and that served as its only roadways, the Park folks occasionally guided their canoes to the hotel landing, however, to spend an evening hour on the great veranda and watch the throng on the board-walk. The brazen brass, the boom of drums, the cries of souvenir hawkers and the warning whistle of crowded incoming and outgoing excursion boats, merged with the muffled roar of shuffling feet and the staccato voices of merrymakers determined to get full value out of their piece of silver.

With a group of Park folk, June Ferriss sat on the hotel gallery watching the passing show with amused eyes. Edward Todhunter, known to his familiars as Teddy Tod, was imploring her tearfully to accompany him for a ride on the wooden horses.

"You have no idea how hotty and superior you feel while you go 'round and 'round," he urged. "Come on, June, be a sport!"

"Ted is simply mad over that ridiculous Carrousel," exclaimed pretty Mrs. Dick Hayes. "I believe that is why he drags us over here every little while. We always vow we will never come again after we have been mobbed and crushed, but somehow he wheedles us back."

"Does he!" cried Sam London wrathfully. "We are so easy we just feed out of his hand, that's all. Look

at that bally procession of white hopes with rented paddles on their shoulders. And the girls with ten-inch hat pins and near-diamond barrettes! Have we left our happy homes for this? and will some kind friend tell us why?"

"Cheer up, Sam," said Mr. Todhunter soothingly. "We know you can't ride the horses because it makes you be sick in your tummy, but to June and me it brings back fond memories of blue ribbons and the smell of the tan-bark. So don't be selfish, my son."

"Yes, that band sounds like Madison Square!" cried Mrs. Dick ironically. "Don't humour him, June! And a little of this goes a long way. I move we adjourn and seek civilisation again."

"And as a punishment befitting his crime, I move we go to Ted's camp and drink up his root beer. I have a thirstiness and the wet goods here likes me not," added her husband.

"Surest thing you know!" put in Babe Blake, rubicund and the ever somnolent, waking from a nap. "He made about four dozen bottles and I'll bet they're sunk in the nice cool lagoon this minute. Come on, fellows!"

"No, they're on the roof of my tent," said Teddy calmly.

"They're on the——!"

"Four doz——!"

"Root beer bot——!"

"Your tent! Why, what the——!"

Teddy raised his arms in imitation of the band master and called encouragingly, "Now, altogether—ready! Because they busted—and blew up—and the roof of the tent being fastened—it stopped the beer—and the beer stayed there—but the corks came back—and hit me on the head."

Sinuous and smoothly quiet as Indian-manned craft of birch the line of canoes, homeward bound, stole along the lagoons, leaving a glare of yellow light on the sky and a slowly dying medley of raucous sound. Ahead, some fine lines of electric lights were picked out like a delicate rope of brilliants against the ebon-black of the Park trees, but they did not offend the majestic calm of the night, the mellow roar of the surf against the beach, the snow-splendour of moonlight that bathed waters and sand and shrubbery in its exquisite enchantment.

The deft paddles slid through the lagoon surface without marring its smoothness, and only the rhythmic fall of shining drops from the blade, like a broken string of beads swinging softly down on the shimmering, moonlit mirror, sounded through the ineffable calm of the night. Far across the bay the City appeared like a fairy city of soft-glowing mystery against the deep purple of the sky, and home-coming lake steamers, outlined from bow to stern with scintillant incandescents, floated in panoramic stillness across the water.

Somewhere out on the lake the buoy-bell tolled, the weird, irregular sound of its bell floating hauntingly inshore as it lifted and dipped on the slow swell that moved oilily forward to lift and curl and fall heavily in a smother of foam on the beach.

"And listen! There goes the mooley-cow!" said June, raising herself on her elbow among her cushions, while Mr. London, who paddled, paused with blade uplifted and turned his face to the lake.

The canoes had reached the silence of the Park and the night seemed to brood with softly dark pinions trailing over shadowy sand and water, the more restful because of the moon-silver that touched everything with its high-lights of tender glory.

But vague fear troubled the drowsy serenity as out of the darkness that lay beyond the moon's path on the lake, a long, shuddering cry, deep-throated and anguished, welled up and up till it broke into a strangled choke that made the sudden silence that followed a horrible thing.

"Calling to her calf, poor old girl," said Mr. London, as he lowered his paddle into the water and then drew it forward with an easy twist, rudderwise, while the feather-craft shot forward on a straight line. "There must be a fog coming, as the old lady is airing her woes, but there is certainly no sign of one just now on this Isle of the Blest."

"How uncanny she is—her warning travels out over those black waters as though it was bugled through dead men's bones!"

June sank back among the cushions with a shiver. The silence was again pierced by the clamouring voice of the siren, and the closing choke filled the far darkness with evil phantoms.

"Yep—sounds like an East Side hold-up," Mr. London agreed cheerfully. "And it doesn't fit into the scenario here, so I don't approve of it. We are a nice, law-abiding lot of Christians and that note of battle, murder and sudden death just doesn't belong, that's all. With all Edison's fine work, why doesn't he get busy with the sirens, I wonder?"

A sudden idea illumined Mr. London's mind at this juncture and he dropped his paddle across the canoe and drifted.

"Even if we do go to the happy hunting grounds via the water route, we don't want to be reminded of that possibility every time a bit of fog drifts across the waves. And instead of this unearthly moan of the mooley-cow

like a teary Niobe of the barnyard, Mr. Edison ought to invent a record-affair that would carry over the deep. Mary Garden, now, in *'Pelleas et Melisande'*—she has a nice, mooley-cow note in her lower register that would be a peach. Each lighthouse could have its own grand opera star, don't you know, and see what a classical education it would be for pilots! I ought to patent that idea and take it up with Edison. It would revolutionise maritime affairs. Even Little Italy in the steerage would weep with joy when it heard its Caruso bellow out from Nantucket, say. Wonderful idea! You ought to be hysterical with admiration, June. And you're making about as much noise as a Dungeness crab!" wound up Mr. London indignantly.

"Well, you're making enough noise for a whole menagerie," replied Miss Ferriss placidly. "And you've out-talked the siren. She isn't saying a word. And if you don't get on, those devoted friends of ours ahead will clean out Ted's commissariat and not leave us a bone. And I'm starved!"

The contents of the commissariat were spread out in his "ancestral hall" as Mr. Todhunter called the middle section of his roomy tent, which was floored, partitioned and furnished with comforts and also luxuries. The Islanders believed in the simple life, but did not see any logical reason why that should include discomforts that were avoidable.

Consequently tents as well as cabins and bungalows were weather proof, as weather runs in that part of the country, and were constructed to resist the occasional gales that stirred up the great lakes and made things interesting for the coast guards.

Mr. Todhunter's ancestral hall had a broad couch with many fat cushions, some open book-shelves stuffed

with books and magazines, shaded electric lights—for the Island power-house supplied this comfort to its family—hickory arm chairs with gay, tufted chintz padding, a framed *"Mona Lisa"* and a refrigerator.

"You see, Eliza gives a high-brow atmosphere to the ancestral hall," Mr. Todhunter explained to June who had promptly pre-empted the couch. "William Morris says you must eliminate everything but what is actually a thing of beauty or of utility, so I did that same and proceeded to centre-stage the inscrutable dame and the cold-storage plant."

"At that Eliza is no beauty," objected Mrs. Dick. "She hasn't any eyebrows or eyelashes and looks like my cook."

"Well, me for *Mona,"* said Babe Blake sleepily. "She hangs over the commissariat with her cool smile that helps the ice stay put till we get home. And she is a nice discreet party—don't catch her telling all she knows to her bosom friend! Gimme a sandwich, Sam."

"Why, I gave you one," exclaimed Mr. London, who was busy at the table with carving knife, bread, ham and mustard.

"Well, I want more," aggrievedly returned Mr. Blake. "If you'd put less art and more doins in your sandwiches I would fill up quicker. Sandwiches come in the utility class, anyhow. They don't have to look like a Japanese miniature landscape on parchment to Fletcherize well. Gimme some Bock, Dick."

"Well, for the love of Pete! Get up and help carve the Bock, if you're so thirsty. I had to fish 'em out of the lagoon while you and June grabbed all the cushions over there and took it easy," Mr. Hayes said irately.

"June grabbed two more than me," said Mr. Blake virtuously. "And the doctor says I must not over-ex-

ercise in hot weather. My—er—my heart is affected."

"Yes, I know—the affection sells peanuts and popcorn on the City dock and her front name is Pepita," grinned Mr. London.

"Well, any girl that can keep Babe awake long enough to reach a heart buried in two hundred pounds of ung-bung-pung, is a dandy," remarked Mr. London.

"Have a sandwich, Babe, and don't pay any attention to them," said June soothingly. "They are only jealous because you are better looking than they are."

"I like June," sighed Mr. Blake. "I like June very much. She is a perfect lady. She has been properly brought up. She doesn't bawl to the whole neighbourhood about a person having 'another' sandwich. She says, with proper delicacy, have 'a' sandwich. June has a soul. You people are all right as far as you go—you mean well," Mr. Blake conceded generously, "but June and I are in a class by ourselves. We are sensitive to the harmonies of the universe—we are psychic. June, will you marry me?"

"Yes, indeedy—anything to be obliging," said Miss Ferriss cheerfully, dabbling some mustard on a morsel of bread and reaching for an olive.

"She can't—I asked her first," objected Mr. Todhunter, who was on his knees peering anxiously into the refrigerator. "Sam, where did you put the anchovy? Oh, Lord! It's in the dish of strawberry jam. How can a man be a Christian with anchovy mixed up with jam! I did, too, Infant! You were asleep on the beach and June and I were out on the diving float."

"M-hm. He did. I had forgotten," murmured Miss Ferriss. "You see, I like them both," she waved the olive with a comprehensive sweep. "But I suppose I

couldn't marry them both, could I?" She appealed, with eyes mournfully limpid, to the company.

"Well, it isn't exactly customary in our set," remarked Mrs. Dick. "At least, not two at a time. But you could make a note of it, June child. Keep one of them on your waiting list, don't you know."

"Oh, you don't say!" exclaimed Mr. Hayes, regarding his wife with gloomy suspicion through the smoke of his cigar. "By that same token, was that your waiting list you were poring over in your writing case down by the sad sea waves this morning?"

"No, my darling—that was the laundry list," said Mrs. Hayes with a sigh. "And in these days of careless laundries, and servantless homes, a poor woman has not much time to keep her sentimental affairs checked up. Such a nice man over from the City—guest of the Stanleys, June—the man with the nose, you know—he danced with me at the Wednesday night hop and after we strolled out on the gallery in the moonlight and he was saying something so delicately touching about the wistful look in my eyes, and I was beginning to think perhaps Dick didn't really appreciate me, after all. And then I suddenly remembered that we were out of coffee and the little store on the board-walk closed at half past nine. And if I don't have my coffee at breakfast, life isn't worth living. So I just had to leave the poor man and grab Teddy and we sprinted and just made it, didn't we, Ted?"

"And you still owe me the forty cents," her host reminded her firmly.

CHAPTER SIX

YOO-HOO! Yoo-hoo!"

June Ferriss stirred, rubbed her eyes sleepily then quickly sat up in bed.

"Yoo-hoo!"

A shower of pebbles flew past the French doors, braced back to admit the full sweep of the lake wind, and fell with a rattle on the floor.

"Yoo-hoo! Oh, you June child!" chanted a chorus down on the lawn and the June child hastily wrapped a kimono around her and stepped through the open doorway out on the veranda. Her hair lifted and billowed out like a flag of brown silk as the brisk breeze caught it and she leaned over the railing and shook a small fist at the bath-robed and rain-coated group below.

"Will you stop your noise!" she hissed. "You'll wake the dad and I want him to sleep. For mercy sake, give me two minutes to get into my suit. I'm not deaf nor dead," she wound up wrathfully.

" 'She is not dead, but sleepeth,' " quoted Mr. Todhunter sepulchrally. "Oh, fairest Juliet!" Juliet reappeared on the lower veranda, sat down on the steps and thrust out her feet to have her sandals tied by two kneeling swains while she coiled her hair into a big soft knot and stuffed it into a bathing cap.

"Pinkly dewy as a peach blossom!" commented Mrs. Dick Hayes as she looked down at her with frank envy. "It takes me twenty minutes to get the sleep massaged out of my face and you look as dimpling and rosy as a baby that has just finished its nap. It really isn't decent,

June Ferriss, to tumble out of bed looking like a Greuze picture. You ought to be suppressed as a nuisance."

The pretty matron, who was just fifteen pounds overweight and knew it to the full bitter ounce, sighed as she pulled her Turkish towelling robe tighter around her and smothered a yawn with one shapely tanned hand.

June sprang lightly to her feet and laughed.

"Why, you look like the queen of Sheba in that gorgeous scarlet and white robe, Nancy," she cried.

Gay shouts from the rest of the Island colony, half obscured in the surf, greeted the "Clandeboye Ave." group. The "Avenue" ran across the Island from lake to bay, a lazy lagoon serving as roadway. The "Long Pond" was about midway and the spacious club house with its ball-room and wide double-decker galleries faced the pond, where the aquatic sports and contests were held.

Several "avenues" crossed the Island, their bungalows having each its boat-house facing the lagoon. But the lake shore had the longest line of island homes. Every day from early spring to late fall, the entire colony went in for its early morning "dip," and the beach was already decorated with discarded Turkish robes and cloaks of all colours.

June, Mrs. Dick and "the boys" added theirs to the collection and dog-trotted into the tossing foam of the surf, which was running high. All were good swimmers, and passing the more frivolous who were "ducking" the rollers and doing calisthenics around the life-lines, they were soon among the other heads pressing steadily across the great swells that moved grandly in from the lake.

The sun, newly risen, sent its early radiance in tempered warmth across the water and the pearl tints of the

dawn were deepening into a rainbow flush of rose and daffodil that swept around the horizon line, where the dove greys and greens of the water met the fathomless blue of the sky.

June, carried well out by her easy, over-head stroke, gave a lithe twist to her slender young body and rested, floating on the water. The cool breeze played across her wet lips and flushed cheeks; the inshore drive of the waves lifted her relaxed limbs to the crest of the swell and slid her gently down into the darkly green gulf of waters, only to pick her up, as though its toy, and carry her again to the light and brilliancy of the next billow.

London's dark, wet head and tanned face—Teddy Tod's wide grin—the Babe's drowsy bliss as he floated near her—Mrs. Dick's perky red bonnet—all adorned the great rollers sweeping in to break thunderously on the shore. They were near, these very good friends, and yet she was alone, gloriously alone, drifting like a little chip on the vast breast of this inland sea.

The sheer physical joy of life—life that tingled like wine through her veins—thrilled through her and caught at her breath flutteringly. The magic of it all—the unearthly beauty of sky and water and dawn over all—the transparent aqua-marine depths that glowed around and beneath her—the power that lifted and played with her languid body with such strange strength and wonderful gentleness—the great, mellow diapason of broken waves tumbling against the breakwater and thrusting lengthening plumes of snow across the smooth sand—all these blended in their intoxication of loveliness.

And June, who had known lake and Island in all their moods since she was a child, only found the fascination of them grow the keener as summer succeeded summer.

"Oh, it is wonderful, Sammy—wonderful!" she cried, and Mr. London, swimming near, assented.

"Some lake," he admitted. Then reaching out a muscular brown arm, he gathered a handful of bathing suit at her shoulder. "Breakfast time—and I could eat the breakwater," he added. "If you can rhapsodise with your mouth shut, I'll tow you in."

CHAPTER SEVEN

NORA, housekeeper, cook and general factotum, had been a member of the Ferriss household since the time of June's birth. The months following the accident and the death of Mrs. Ferriss found Nora, hale and fifty, a tower of strength.

Mr. Ferriss she loved, June she worshipped, and Mrs. Ferriss she had always regarded as a trying dispensation of Providence. The method of her removal was shocking, but the removal itself was a relief. Nora did not mince words in communion with herself.

The slow recovery of her master, however, she worried over, though she lied cheerfully and fluently to June. She cited astonishing and wholly imaginary cases of a similar nature, all of whom attained to remarkably robust health within periods of varying length, and June, who knew Nora's artistic capabilities in fiction, as in other lines, knew that she was lying, but was partially comforted because it was so fervently convincing.

So after the morning plunge, June would find her father waiting for her at the little breakfast table on the vine-shaded veranda. He would listen to her cheerful chatter with smiling content, sometimes rousing to his old, gay raillery and mental vigour, but always to sink back later into a sort of serene abstraction that would last for hours.

The cushioned steamer chair, sheltered by the vines, a little stand of books and papers and his cane beside him ready for use for a brief, slow stroll at long intervals, contented him. He asked no questions about

business matters, and though his general health seemed to adjust itself satisfactorily, his strength fluctuated uncertainly and he was very easily tired.

So with June and Nora it became habitual to watch the white, high-bred face with its dreaming eyes and faint smile, to anticipate the greater whiteness that would sweep over it when the effort of speaking or the sound of other voices sapped the vitality that remained low. And their watchfulness sheltered him and kept him safe, as in still waters.

After breakfast they watched the little fleet of canoes threading the lagoons on their way to the landing where the men embarked for a day of business in the city. The women folk—wives, sisters or sweethearts—did the paddling while the City toilers stretched luxuriously on the cushions with matutinal cigar or pipe.

Every now and then paddle and pipe would be waved with a cheery hail to the sick man whom many of them had known long, and fragmentary plans for the day exchanged with June, hugging her knees on the steps.

"And it's firewood to-day, Dad Ferriss," she informed him the perfect morning that she had admired the scenery while Mr. London towed her landward. "If you don't have your fire to nod over when the night winds nip your blessed Roman nose, you know you are not fit to live with, your temper is that shockin'."

"Of course you and Nancy Hayes and the Indians do not like open fireplaces," her father murmured reflectively.

"Oh, well, I sort of lounge around the fire to be near you and the boys hang 'round to be near me. See?"

Miss Ferriss waved her hand airily and Mr. Ferriss gravely replied, "I see!"

A high and clear "Hallo-o-o!" from the direction of

the bay announced the return of Mrs. Dick from the pier, and June ran lightly down to the boat-house, where she launched the big, flat-bottomed punt. Tossing in two long poles, she vaulted in after them. Mrs. Hayes, first dragging her canoe up on the bank, followed her, and the two girls poled the unwieldy craft skilfully along the winding lagoon and out and along the shore line of the bay for a short distance.

Little dancing waves played an impertinent rat-a-plan against the wide, square bow of the punt, and the erratic breezes whipped waving strands of hair across the flushed faces of the boatwomen as they moved steadily from end to end, poling toward an inlet where the swing of the tide had piled bleached driftwood in great shining heaps on the beach.

"The Lord is good to his own," Mrs. Hayes remarked piously. "That last blow has just carried in oodles of wood and right to our own door-yard, as one might say. And that outfit along the beach hardly ever get a sliver."

"Odd how those freaky tides bring it in through the gap to the bay and then swing it around and back to the Island," June answered, balancing on the stern of the boat and shading her eyes while she gloated over the snow-white heaps of the jetsam of the restless waters. "Did you ever see such a splendid pile? Isn't it gorgeous, Nance?"

"Bully," Mrs. Hayes answered, springing to land with sure-footed agility, notwithstanding the fact that she was, as she expressed it, "a poor, down-trodden married person of five years' standing," and making the painter fast to some wreckage.

June followed and the two worked busily carrying the strangely light water-and-sun-bleached driftwood into

the boat, where they piled the load several feet high above the gunwales.

Then balancing cautiously on top of the load, they poled slowly back home.

The Hayes' cabin adjoined the broad-eaved, weathered shingle home of the Ferrisses. Every summer since her marriage to Dick Hayes, Mrs. Dick and June had "pardnered" in the joys and labours of life in the open, which on the Island had the full delights of water and land, sun and storm. And the Islanders, who were for the most part "old residenters," held to the freedom and informality of the earliest days when the colony was small. Deft manipulation of the Island property regulated the admission of new-comers, and ostentation and display were carefully elbowed away to localities that desired and welcomed them.

The Island did not. It drifted and danced and laughed its long, indolent summers away with friendly content with its easy *dolce far niente* plan of existence. At the clubhouse of the I. A. A. A.—the Island Amateur Aquatic Association—a weekly Wednesday night hop was held, to which city guests could be invited. But "dress" was frowned on. The men wore their flannels and the women simple cotton frocks.

Entertaining was of the simplest and of a most haphazard nature. The last boat to the city left at 11 P. M. At 11:30 the patriarchal Island government had "lights out" on board-walk and piers, and as the early morning plunge was in order for the entire colony, the Island retired early.

Saturday afternoons the club members had their sports on Long Pond, and they rowed in needle-like "outriggers," swam, paddled in single and war canoes, and bunted each other overboard in tilting contests with

padded poles, with much enthusiasm. The non-combatants and visitors applauded from the bleachers on shore and from the line of water craft anchored along the rope that marked the course on the other side.

Bets of gloves, confections and small silver were wrangled over heatedly and the decisions of the judges disputed with much indignation and shocking disrespect. As the protests sometimes took the form of personal attack, those long-suffering personages took the precaution of wearing racing gear and fished themselves out of the water, after an argument that resulted in their being deposited there, with the philosophical resignation of experience.

CHAPTER EIGHT

AFTER luncheon June and her father, accompanied by Mrs. Hayes, carried rugs, pillows and sand umbrellas to the beach for the long, golden afternoon of drowsy reading that led to the five-o'clock home-coming of the men from the city.

Along the sands and on the breakwater many big umbrellas of varied colouring were tipped at crazy angles, while bare-legged and very brown children built endless castles in the sand and upset themselves in the shallow curling edge of the waves that whirled across the smooth, wet floor of the beach.

Mr. Ferriss watched the waves with restful peace. Mrs. Hayes chatted with much animation for ten minutes, yawned, and frankly went to sleep.

And June Ferriss, prone on the sand, with her chin cupped in her hands and elbows on a cushion, lay listening with vague uneasiness to the booming against the breakwater and the hiss of the "combers" that raced in from the heaving, glittering expanse of the lake.

She loved the Island and its life with a home love that rooted more strongly and deeply with each passing year. The wild, sweet winds always appealed to the passionate craving for free things that dominated her and that was to colour her life and shape its course.

The great expanse of sky with its gorgeous pageantry of clouds was a daily glory—primrose and silver at dawn; at noon piling Alpine peak on peak of dazzling snow on a sea of fathomless blue; at sunset tumbling Titan splendours of molten copper and crimson and ame-

thyst against a purple canopy pierced with stars; at night a velvet blackness of infinite softness and depth with its slender, exquisite crescent of silver looking delicately down at its shimmering reflection on the sleeping waters.

Sky and water in all their moods, gentle or terrible, held her in the ever-deepening fascination of their greatness and their mystery. Their beauty might be serene or it might be tragic, but it was never coarse. Their fury might crush or kill, but it would never soil nor offend.

Life had already spoken to the girl in unequivocal terms, and she shrank from it as from the harsh vernacular of a harpy. Intensely human and vital, she had nothing of the pale sacrificial fire of the *exalté* in her soul. She wanted to live to the full, to feel, to know. She did not want a walled prison for her emotions any more than she wanted the walled grave for her soft and warm young limbs.

But she was finding that Life was not a task-mistress, stern but just, cruel perhaps, but august in her discipline. She was finding, instead, that Life had a painted face and a false tongue; that Truth, bruised and bewildered, was a vassal in her tinsel courts, and a thing of contempt to her shrewd-eyed ministers.

With emotions that stirred as the Æolian's naked wires, to every ether-wave that touched them, the daughter of James Ferriss had derived from her father a gift of dispassionate analysis that reached through warring conditions with the chill, clear accuracy of a white ray of light across angry seas.

And one possessed of this gift, double-edged and true as Damascene steel, is one who will pillory their own emotions, who will crucify their own dreams, and who

will lay their own heart under the lens and with interest tabulate the agony of its pulsations.

As Life broadened and deepened to her view, she looked upon it with a growing distaste. With something of the high idealism of an Arthur dreaming over the nobility and fine honour of his Round Table, June had dreamed through her girlhood, seeing in those around her the gentle women and brave men that trod through the old-world stories she pored over in the attic window.

But, like Arthur, she beheld the crude manners of a crude world play havoc with the stately knights and lovely women who had been her dream-familiars, and in their stead she saw the horned and fanged passions of a cave and tree ancestry stir and lift beneath satin doublet and jewelled plume.

Under the rude awakening she winced and rebelled, and so rebelling found within herself the dual nature of dreamer and philosophical cynic. For her dreams she gave battle. But in her own weakness that sometimes startled and humiliated her, she saw the weaknesses of her kind. And while she knew the dreamer soul of her would battle always toward the stars, she knew as well that between the people of her world and the nobles and ladies of an Arthur's fashioning there was a great gulf fixed.

"I wish we could stay here always, Dad Ferriss," she said restlessly, lifting eyes darkly troubled to the face of the man holding mute communion with the vast waters.

"Why?" he asked.

"Because this never disappoints me, nor hurts," she said. "It is all comfortable and safe, like an old, old friend. But when winter comes and we have to leave

it, I smother as soon as we get into the sleeper and start home. And when we get back to that great hive of swarming, struggling humans, I smother more. It is discordant—false, and I am false with it. Here I am just myself. I am real, and everything is real around me, and I wish we could stay here—not leave at all."

"Life would find you out—even here," he answered. "There is no moat so deep, no wall so high, that it will keep Life away. We are lotus-eaters for a little while here, but it never lasts. We cannot escape the mill and the grinding."

"But why can't we? Why can't we make our life, to a certain degree, at least, what we wish it? We are at our best here. We can get away from the noise and vulgarity—and worse—that the very air is saturated with back there in 'the mill.' Why need we go back to it? Why not stay in the quiet places, like these, where we are at our best?"

"Because the mill will draw us back into its grinding, in the first place, whether we wish it or not," replied Mr. Ferriss. "And because in the quiet places we are not at our best. We just lie fallow. We are only vegetation. Our spiritual and moral muscles grow flabby from inaction. The sins of omission mean more than something good that was not done. It means the something bad that was not faced and wrestled with and overcome in part, at least. Suppose your regimental colours are spattered and ragged and earth-stained. That all means you have fought over them, anyhow. Would you rather have them in a glass case like a sunrise quilt at a county fair?"

June sat up on the sand and hugged her knees, while she looked up at her father from under the brim of her soft felt hat.

"That all sounds well and is very heroic and high-falutin', James," she remarked, calmly unimpressed. "As Teddy Tod would elegantly express it, it 'listens like a Fourth of July oration.' You did yourself proud, if, as I strongly suspect, you did filch some of your peroration from the Fourth Reader. But it needs the popping of fire-crackers to be convincing. You say we should get into the fray, back there in the hive, to work out character. You mean, that is the scheme of things and we are a part of the scheme. Who gave you this private and valuable information?"

Mr. Ferriss reached out his cane and gently prodded Mrs. Hayes on the arm. That lady sleepily rubbed her eyes and looked reproachful.

"Awfully sorry, you know, but I need help," said Mr. Ferriss. "June got me deep into metaphysics and now has me wriggling on a pin while she microscopes the weak places in my logic."

"You poor dear!" Mrs. Hayes sat up with much energy and pointed a small but threatening finger at June.

"You leave that nice man alone, young person," she said sternly. "You can out-argue me, and get me tangled up so that I'll admit that black is white when I know it isn't. But I am stronger than you are, and if you get too pestiferous, I'll roll you into the lake."

"The argument of nations," June laughed, flipping a shell down Mrs. Hayes' neck. "The stronger nation wins the battle and then sings a hymn of praise to God. But where was the God of the Russians when Nippon—plucky, clean, drilled and devoted Nippon!—prodded the mangy bear and made him sit up and beg?"

"Dear me! Let's go home, Dad Ferriss," cried Mrs. Hayes, gathering up herself and an armful of cushions.

"Don't you know that it isn't—what is that nice old word that sounds like wax flowers and Berlin wool mottoes?—genteel! Don't you know that it isn't genteel to question the gods of your ancestors? Why can't you be a genteel lady and 'never mind the whys and wherefores,' as Josephine used to say in *Pinafore?*"

"That's it!" said June, tucking the rugs under one arm and slipping the other up over her father's shoulder. "It is comic opera, so much of it. But we are so solemn about it all and take ourselves so seriously. We go through little stereotyped calisthenic exercises in habits and customs just because our grandfathers and the fathers of our grandfathers did, and we are funny and we don't know it. We won't get away from ourselves far enough to get perspective."

"Shocking!" Mrs. Hayes shook her head mournfully over the edge of a violently coloured college cushion that scraped her chin. "I wonder the ghosts of your respectable Scotch Presbyterian ancestors do not rise up and haunt you."

"The ghosts of our ancestors are pretty much of a nuisance," replied Miss Ferriss impatiently. "They established a lot of customs that we realise are poppycock, but we don't dare say so and break from them."

"My dear, they were respectable people!" remonstrated Mrs. Hayes.

"Yes! And they crucified every human emotion and impulse and beautiful thing on that same altar of respectability," said June, making a *moue* at the pretty, disapproving face over the cushions. "Respectable? Of course they were respectable. But, good Heavens! I would rather be human. Is respectability everything? Why, three-fourths of it is built on lies and smells to Heaven, and you know it."

"On lies! Why, June Ferriss!"

Mrs. Hayes rolled the cushions in a heap on the Ferriss steps and then sat on them. It was her duty to be shocked and to try to show Miss Ferriss the error of her ways, but there was no reason why she should not be comfortable in the meantime.

Mr. Ferriss settled himself in his steamer chair and looked at his daughter with eyes that twinkled. Then he nodded to Mrs. Hayes.

"Better send for Bayue-Gordon, Nancy, and have him give her a talking to."

The Rev. Bayue-Gordon, of St. Paul's-on-the-Lake, the pretty little vine-clad Church of England to which the Islanders wended their peaceful way on Sabbath mornings, was an English clergyman with a deep and sonorous voice and convictions. June Ferriss rarely missed a service and told him frankly that it was because he intoned the psalms and the litany so beautifully and also because disagreeing with what he preached, as she generally did, aided her in clearing up her own mind on many points.

Bayue-Gordon was not disturbed in his convictions by the flaws that Miss Ferriss pointed out to him when they argued over the sermons of preceding Sundays, as they frequently did. He was of English birth and accepted the church as his brother, a banker, accepted the Bank of England. They were Established, which was written with a capital letter. To question the infallibility of either was of as much use as playing battledore and shuttlecock against the walls of a citadel.

But the heresy of the calm-eyed young woman disturbed him, and he told himself that it was because she was but a spiritual stranger within his gates that he felt it incumbent upon him to appeal, whenever occasion

offered, to the soul that was without the shelter of the fold. This, of course, meant his own fold, and he carefully evaded the fact that for some reason he found the study of this particular militant soul strangely entertaining.

"Bayue-Gordon? Oh, we had it out about all that yesterday when he came back from Town. He married Nan Annesly and Captain Sterne at noon, you know," said June.

"And what did you say?" enquired Mr. Ferriss, placing the tips of his long white fingers carefully together while he regarded his daughter with enjoyment.

"Say?" June's face grew set and curiously old. "I asked him if all the prayers in the church service and all the respectability in Christendom could marry her thoughts to Sterne while Bob Grayling lived."

"You never did!" gasped Mrs. Hayes.

"I did," said June indifferently. "Sterne is his own cousin and they are nephews of a lord, and Nan will be presented at court while her fortune will fix up Sterne Hall. It is a convenient arrangement all round, and it wasn't very hard for the Annesly and Sterne families to bully and bribe Nan into it, and no doubt she will get used to it in time. But we all know why Grayling went to South Africa so suddenly and why Nan began using rouge."

"But what on earth did Bayue-Gordon say? And how could you, June!"

Mrs. Hayes fluttered her hands in acute distress. To even mention Robert Grayling to the Very Reverend Arthur Cecil Bayue-Gordon, nephew of the august Lord Steyne! What would June do next!

"Why, he invited it himself," said June, pulling a fragrant branch of honeysuckle down to her face. "He

began on my attitude toward the church and what the church stood for and all that. And I said yes, the church stood for the Annesly-Sterne marriage, which was eloquent. And then he got red and said very snubbingly that Nan's children would be connected with the nobility of England instead of being nobodies. And I said children nobly born of a man one loved seemed to me much nicer than unwanted connections for unknown relatives. And that his church might call that sort of thing respectable, but that didn't make it decent."

Mrs. Hayes moaned feebly. "June! You're only a girl! You're not even married yet. And to say such things to a man, and a clergyman——! Good gracious!"

June Ferriss looked at her curiously. "Yes, I'm only a girl," she said reflectively. "But it's the girls whom the church marries, isn't it? If it allows us to be injured and defends conventions that injure us, why shouldn't we talk about it? Who cares—but the girl herself?"

CHAPTER NINE

CANOES from all parts of the Island were floating gently along the lagoons toward the clubhouse. Each canoe had a tiny lantern at its prow, and the lights looked like harnessed fireflies as they decorously followed the lagoon curves toward the Long Pond. The clubhouse itself was gay with Japanese lantern-hung galleries and strains from its orchestra drifted out over the water, accelerating the speed of lazy paddles with its seductive lilt.

It was nearing the end of the season and June was dancing with young London. Keenly fond of dancing as she was, and particularly fond of dancing where lake breezes played through wide-flung French windows and the rippling silver of moonlight could be seen on murmurous waters, yet to-night she was plainly abstracted. Mr. London himself was much less loquacious than usual, and his dancing was not marked by the abandon that usually characterised that of the strenuous young athletes of the Island colony.

An extra number of Town guests among the fluttering arrivals on the floating dock where the canoeists left their toy boats meant an increasing crowd on the floor, and London guided June out to the gallery railing.

"Yes, there are too many for comfort," June assented, lifting her face to the cool wind. "Dancing is spoiled when it becomes a scramble."

"But will you look at the Babe!" laughed London. "It is the one thing that wakes him up and he is having the time of his life."

June nodded smilingly to the crimson, blissful face visible for the moment among the kaleidoscopic figures.

"And light as Titania on his feet—the paradoxical gift of heavy people. Isn't it wonderful?" said June.

"Whom has Nancy in tow?" asked London, as Mrs. Hayes and a tall stranger swung into view.

"Oh, that's her man with a nose. Don't you remember? I do hope she will not spoil sentiment this time by remembering that she needs more bacon for breakfast."

"Well, that moon and that music do not suggest bacon exactly," London admitted. "But breakfast time has a habit of coming around every morning somehow, and a rasher or two sure does come in handy."

"Barbarian!" laughed his companion.

"You're another," said Mr. London promptly. "Let's go down on the beach."

A short stroll across the sands brought them to the shore where the waves were rolling in with an unusually hushed sound. A broad, broken path of light across the lake marked the serene course of the moon, and from somewhere out where silver and shadow met and merged, the buoy-bell called, hesitant but insistent.

June Ferriss seated herself on a piece of wreckage, jetsam of a forgotten storm, and leaned back with a sigh. London leaned against a bleached rib of the one-time schooner and looked down at her in silence.

The crisp breeze rumpled the golden curls that clustered with womanish beauty around his temples and the tanned, handsome young face was given added charm by the moonlight.

"Do you know, you are really a very good-looking boy, Sammy," Miss Ferriss murmured graciously.

"Yes, even Ted admits that I don't look bad in the dark."

London spoke a little absently, then ran his fingers through the yellow curls and tossed back his head with a gesture of sudden resolution.

"June, I want to say something to you."

He put one foot up on the wreckage near her and leaned forward on his knee, looking down at her gravely.

"It is nearing the end of the season and we will all be scattering soon. A good many things may happen before next summer, and—June, will you marry me?"

She did not stir nor answer, and the note of the bell quavered over the waters to them. London reached out his hand and touched a strand of her hair that the wind had loosened from the soft coil at the nape of her neck.

"You do not love me, but you do not love any one else. And I—words do not amount to much. They are but 'dust thrown in the air.' But, June, if you would trust me, I would do everything in my power to make you happy."

The new touch of gravity sat well on the strenuously healthy and frequently noisy Sammy London. His tanned face, usually alight with the white teeth showing in his ready, flashing smile, had a very attractive expression of manliness, and his eyes and voice showed that he was very much in earnest.

June, her whole being in tune with the soft beauty of the night—with the old, loved charm of murmurous waters and vagrant winds, and the cool, clean sweep of moonlight—looked up into the dark face with a little responsive stir of the pulses.

She had known him for several long summers, this

big, clean-cut Sammy London, and she knew his love for the "big outdoors" that matched her own. Her friends were his friends and his people would be her people, and that they were people of fine ideals and gentle breeding she knew. What he offered her she could see and appraise with reasonable certainty. He came of conservative and conscientious stock—of quiet blood that, if it did not make, neither did it mar history.

The women of his family led placid, sheltered lives. From the cradle they could almost see the straight, calm path that closed with a modest headstone that marked a straight, calm grave.

She would be cared for, shielded, and would occupy her quiet years with little unimportant duties importantly elaborated to fill out each passing day. She would know sorrow, now and then, which would be quietly and decorously borne. And good taste and self-effacement, which were the household deities and synonymous in the lexicon of his family, would blend her life insensibly into the general and gentle monotone of theirs.

He was in all things a gentleman and markedly good-looking, in a wholesome, virile fashion. His youth called to the youth that bounded nymph-like through her veins. The strong white teeth that flashed in the dark face were not whiter than his record. His life was fastidiously clean with the healthy cleanness of the athlete. And under the thin, silken shirt that the wind stretched taut across chest and arms she could see the trained muscles swell in the splendid curves that sculptors love.

She smiled whimsically up at him.

"You are awfully decent—and I like you a heap, Sammy London."

Gathering her wrists into his muscular fingers, he drew her, swaying lightly, to her feet.

"Then try and learn to like me more. Give me a chance—Sweetheart—sweetheart!"

The yellow head, burned with summer suns and winds, bent low over the brown. June yielded to the muscular arms, and their warm strength through the cool, thin silk against her cheek again wakened the creeping stir through all her pulses.

"Sweetheart—sweetheart!"

It was a whisper now, one with the whispering of mysterious waters and night breezes and trees that swayed behind them. And the dark face lay against hers, and lips, warm-breathed but fragrant, found her own.

And why not? She thought with drowsy content, while he held her with close but careful tenderness. Just to drift with the current into still waters—why not? For uneasiness and vague fear had assailed her lately and disturbed the old, lazy serenity that belonged to the Island. Dread, unseen and formless, moved shadowy draperies in shadowy corners. And while childhood and girlhood had known the blight of discord, she had not known till now the gnawing terror of impending ill.

Her marriage with London would avert it, that something that threatened, and she shrank from it and into his arms with relief. Yes, why not? They were young and youth was good when freed from fears, and when summers were golden, and arms muscular and shielding hold you safe from problems that disturbed.

"June—will you give me a chance?"

She pressed back from the lips that whispered against hers, and the wind from the lake, precursor of an approaching storm, swept with sudden coldness across her

face. The bell out in the darkness tolled anxiously, fearfully, the wreck against which they leaned trembled as the rising tide drove against it. And as a driving, ragged cloud greyed and then blotted out the soft splendour of the moon, the long, low, mournful call of the siren came across the troubled waves.

Assent was on June's lips, but she found herself with hands pressed against his breast while she turned her face to the lake and listened.

"June——!"

She shivered and lifting her hand, laid cold fingers on his lips.

"Hush, Sammy! I don't know—I must think. Come —let us go back."

CHAPTER TEN

MRS. HAYES occupied a hammock on her shady veranda. Her friend, June Ferriss, occupied another. They were resting after the hop of the night before—not that they were tired, but because Island life was more given to excuses for rest than anything else.

Mrs. Hayes greeted the monosyllable with enthuions, a box of chocolates and some novels. Miss Ferriss, content with one cushion, stared out over the bay at the irregular sky-line of "Town" visible through the blue haze.

"Didn't Sammy London ask you to marry him last night? He looked like it, if I know signs, and I think I do."

"Yes."

Mrs. Hayes greeted the monosyllable with enthusiasm. To do this justice, she sat up, spilling an avalanche of literature and confectionery unheeded from the hammock.

"'Ray!'" she cheered joyously. "Now you will stay up North where nice Christians live, instead of going back to that ungodly City and courting destruction for your soul. You've a nice soul, June child, and you shouldn't lose it. Lovely! That's a sensible marriage."

June turned suddenly and looked at her. "'Sensible!' That's the answer I have been searching for. If I married Sammy London it would be only because it will be the sensible thing to do. Is that marriage?"

"Of course it is," said Mrs. Hayes cheerfully. "You're not going to quote Laura Jean Libby, are you?" she added plaintively.

"I don't know whom to quote." June turned her cushion over restlessly. "There are so many points of view. If marriage is a practical thing like selecting one's dining-room furniture, one should be sensible, I suppose. But if it is the mating of two people who should be mated and who are intended for each other, and whose mating should colour not only life here but the life after that we can only surmise, but that seems probable— that would call for something more than merely sensible considerations, wouldn't it?"

"But you like Sam, don't you?" Mrs. Hayes fenced adroitly.

"I like several people," drily replied Miss Ferriss.

"I know. But Sammy is so desirable in every way, you would probably grow to love him."

"Probability is a slender plank to build on for Eternity. A marriage is supposed to be for this life and the life to follow. That is a huge thing to establish on mere liking, isn't it?"

"Sam loves you, June," pleaded Mrs. Hayes.

"As much as love means to his type—yes. To him love is largely youth and propinquity. If I refuse him it will hurt him a bit, but it won't hurt long."

"But, dear——" Mrs. Hayes hesitated, then went on anxiously. "You know how uncertain your affairs are. The dear dad is not his old self, and I don't like the tone of your lawyer's letters. If things are bad, would it be wise to refuse Sam London hastily? You would be so safe as his wife. He is not only well off, but steady as a church."

June smiled a little drearily.

"What appalling things you respectable women advocate, Nancy," she said slowly. "You really urge me to marry a man I care nothing for, for my 'board and keep,' and you quite approve that manner of earning one's living, in preference to working in a store, for instance, because it is easier."

"Why, June, you would be his wife!" cried Mrs. Hayes indignantly.

"Words, words!" June laughed contemptuously. "What difference does it make what you would call me? Would I be any different? I would give him my body and bear his children and you and the rest would associate with me, just because you are accustomed to looking on that sort of thing as respectable when a certain service is mumbled over it. I would be thrifty and cautious and crafty. I would make the sale of myself in cold blood, but cover my tracks and have the church help me with its odour of sanctity. And you would get a new gown in honour of the sale and send me a set of place plates. Lord, Lord!—what a shifty set of well-bred jugglers we are!"

"June Ferriss, you are impossible! And what perfectly horrid things for a girl to talk about! Just because I want you to marry a nice man who is square and decent, and who would look after you and keep you comfortable," flared Mrs. Hayes.

"Like your Persian cat, for instance," laughed June. "Take your brand-new pump out of that maple fudge, Nancy, and lie down again, angel. There is nothing worth getting excited about. If I were a Persian I wouldn't mind your plan a bit. But your pretty sophistries only half drape the facts, and we have to live with the facts, you know. So why shouldn't I look at them now and admit their existence?"

"But you express it so baldly—and it isn't so! I am talking about marriage, real marriage—and you make it sound like a—a——"

"Prostitution. Why don't you say it? And so it is, lots of it. It is cultured and refined prostitution, of course, and we have certain rules that must be observed, that are to those of our class what the coarser police regulations are in the segregated district. But the principle is the same."

"Why, those awful women make a business of their terrible lives—they are common——!" gasped her horror-stricken hostess.

"Yes, they are less lucky than we are and do not have our chances," Miss Ferriss said calmly. "They are compelled to know that deadly 'weariness that lies awake at night for hire,' while we can afford to lock our door and our husbands will still have to support us. We do not have to be common because we start higher up on the ladder than they do, poor things. But we sell, just as they do, when the choice comes between that and work."

"I do not call a respectable legal marriage 'selling,' June," said Mrs. Hayes stiffly.

"No, of course you don't. That is just what I am saying." A little pucker gathered between June's level eyebrows and she looked at her friend with frankly dispassionate curiosity. "There are so many things we do not call by the names we could call them. We attend to certain little outward observances and patter over certain stipulated formulæ, and we feel that we have altered the fact into what it should be. But we really haven't, you know. A fact remains a fact. We have simply garnished it to suit our own table and the tables of our friends."

"Do you mean to tell me that a nice woman who is faithful to her husband, and who does her duty to him and her home and her children, is to be compared to a—a—to those horrid creatures you speak of?"

Mrs. Hayes was not dispassionate in her view of the question, and her pretty face was pink with indignation. Miss Ferriss continued to regard her with tranquil attention.

"Couldn't your nice woman be faithful to some man's interests as his housekeeper?—if that is all she can give him in return for her board and keep! Do you think it really quite nice for a nice woman to marry a man's interests? If she has to be faithful to him as a matter of duty, doesn't that show there is something wrong somewhere? A woman who loves does not try to be faithful. She doesn't need to try. She couldn't be anything else. Faithful! Good Heavens, Nancy! What sort of man wants a dutifully faithful woman? What sort of man wants for a wife a patient Griselda who is barricading her heart with prayers and penances to keep it from straying? Would a really decent man tolerate that sort of thing a moment, do you think?"

"But her children——" protested Mrs. Hayes chokily.

"Yes—her children!" June's voice hardened. "And what are her children? We call them legitimate just as we call the union respectable. But does that make them so? If there is no love in the woman, what of the child? The child of a 'dutiful wife'—doesn't that tell a story that we do not dare put into words? We garnish the fact with pretty phrases—but Nature won't! She doesn't back up our pretty make-believes, Nancy! Nature has a brutally blunt way of sticking to fundamentals, and her original fundamental was the 'call' of

mate to mate. Of this she bred giants. But duty wives do not breed giants, honey. No, indeedy!"

"Oh, that is horrible—horrible——!" Mrs. Hayes choked and the tears filled her flashing eyes.

"Yes, it is horrible," said June grimly. "Though you mean what I say, while I mean what is. But if I'm going to live a lie, I am not going to waste dust on my own eyes. You and the rest only need a little thrown your way because you are socially astigmatic anyhow. But it is no use with myself. That attentive female person in the corner only looks sardonic when I try it."

"June, I sometimes think you are 'fey,' with that corner double and the rest of it," Mrs. Hayes exclaimed helplessly.

"Well, maybe my corner double is only what you people call your conscience," explained June. "I seem to be always conscious of a self who is passive, but observant and critical, who regards what the other self does with a full understanding of her motive. And it doesn't leave me with many illusions as to my own superiority to self-interest in what I do. If I marry Sam London you will continue to associate with me, but the corner person won't want to. I could explain your viewpoint to her so elaborately and convincingly that the Recording Angel himself would beam unqualified approval, but that wouldn't move my gentle friend an inch. She would just look things. And she is about as much impressed as the Sphinx when a dust flurry pirouettes down the Appian Way."

Mrs. Hayes retreated behind her badly demoralised guns, dismayed but unconvinced. June was plainly mad, quite mad. And one could not talk nice comfortable commonsense with mad people. June was

clever, a daughter of a clever father, and clever people were never really well balanced. Just as further on up the scale genius was proverbially insane.

So the best thing to do was to placate this disturbing friend of hers and try to shunt her gently into the safe and sure harbour called matrimony, where Mr. London would pay troublesome bills and smother incipient incendiarism with the foggy blanket of his own and his family's unemotional and traditional respectability.

June Ferriss, like all people who were queer, had unexpected ideas of sentiment distressingly mixed up with her many other ideas that were shocking, and while sentiment was all right in its way, it was much better to keep it on a side table with the books in fancy *de luxe* binding that one admired occasionally but never read.

Mrs. Hayes had herself hesitated over the respective merits of three suitors, of whom Mr. Hayes was one, before she became Mrs. Dick. Her affections were in the pleasantly plastic state that but awaited the decision of a young but judicial mind to respond to the mould selected for them.

Mr. Hayes, buoyant, good-natured and well-to-do, was the selection, and the other two were gently and tactfully disposed of. The plastic affections, as expected, settled into place and Mrs. Hayes' tranquil girlhood flowed into the broader, if hardly deeper, stream of matronhood with hardly a ripple to mark a change.

And Mrs. Hayes was quite satisfied. If there were no heights, there were no depths. Of ecstasies, of passion whose way madness lay, she knew nothing. There were people who had strange infatuations and who got themselves into the newspapers, of course, but these people were classed by Mrs. Dick with Filipino and Bulgarian and Mexican people who shared the front page with

them—individuals vaguely understood to inhabit the globe somewhere, but a class apart.

June must be made to marry Sammy London, that Mrs. Hayes decided.

CHAPTER ELEVEN

TWO days of storm had lashed the lake into a fury that strode Medusa-like up and down the coast. Driftwood strewed the beach, while thunderous surf hurled itself in frantic confusion over the breakwater.

All day June wandered restlessly from her father's room to the wide veranda where the stout vines writhed and twisted in the wind. Mr. Ferriss was not so well. He appeared to sink into strange apathy in which he paid little or no heed to what was said and done around him. He did not suffer, but it was difficult to rouse him, and when June would bend over him and speak, it was plainly an effort for him to understand and answer, and a relief when he was permitted to relapse into the semi-stupor that held all his faculties.

And a letter from their lawyer, received that morning, urging their return to the City and stating plainly that their affairs were in a serious state, tormented June with its ominous note of warning. The summer was over, birds and Islanders were alike fluttering uneasily under the hint of Northern cold that stole impalpably over the Island's soft loveliness, and the vague prescience of coming change hardened into dismayed recognition when the big storm caught the toy structures that dotted lawn and sand in its rude grasp, crushing many of them to ruin.

Summer was over. And June Ferriss, looking out at the torn clouds scudding across a sky of gloom, knew that for her the summer was over indeed. The dainty sunlight on rippling waters—the delicate languor of

long, dreamy days and tender, moonlight nights—these were past. A rough hand was dragging a change of scenery for the stage, that rasped harshly across her shrinking nerves.

The *dolce far niente* of Island life, that had been her summer life for all her girlhood years, was already assuming the unfamiliar aspect that familiar things trick the memory with when they are part of memory only. She caught herself looking at the little boat-houses edging the lagoons, the Marquis-tents where the boys were, the little shining rows of plates and saucers sticking out of the sand where the boys had washed them and stuck them to dry and await the next "feed-time"—all the little homely unnoticed things she noticed now with painful attention.

She had not needed to remember them before, but she wanted to remember them now, because she could see the handwriting on the wall and she knew that, for her, Island life, contented and care-free, was ended.

The dinner, daintily served by faithful Nora, was eaten in silence, and Mr. Ferriss, feeble and apathetic, was soon led to his room. The logs were burning fitfully in the fireplace, where the wind now drew the flames smoothly up into the black chimney, now mushroomed them in broken splashes of lilac and amber as a blast drove down into the room.

June, in the easy blue flannel "gym" dress that the women of the Island affected for steady wear, crouched down to brace the driftwood on the brass fire-dogs, and leaning on one knee stared with unseeing eyes into the flames.

"Ye said Mr. Kennedy wrote ye bad news?" Nora enquired as she gathered up the silver. June roused with a long breath and gently laid down the tongs.

"Yes, it sounds pretty bad."

"Well, alanna, don't shpoil yer beauty sleep. Thim ly'er min always make yer throubles heavy to make their bills the same. Sure, an' that's their business. Oi know thim. They cuddent tell the trut' to the mither that bore thim. They just don't know how."

"But Mr. Kennedy is a friend of dad's, Nora," said June.

"And the ould cow was a friend of the hay-sthack." Nora scraped a plate briskly and nodded a wise head whose grizzled hair was gathered into a frankly inartistic knot the size of a bantam egg at the nape of her neck.

"Ly'er min will likely get to Hiven, but it will be because St. Peter, poor dear! ain't up to their thricks. They'll talk the key out of his fist."

June smiled and patted the sturdy calico shoulder affectionately.

"You're an old duck, Nora Casey. And it's a fine 'ly'er' you would have made yourself by that same token. But I'm afraid there are things to be reckoned with back of Mr. Kennedy's letter, and we might as well face them."

She picked up her heavy wool reefer, slipped her arms into it, turned up the storm collar and then pulled a Tam o' Shanter cap over her head and snugly over her eyes.

"I'm going down to the breakwater. Don't sit up for me, and don't lose your own beauty sleep, you cheerful romancer! My, my! What is it going to cost me for masses to get your soul out of purgatory, for the fairy tales you have told? I shudder to think of it, Nora!"

Buttoning the heavy jacket to her throat, June thrust her hands into its pockets and looked sternly at Miss Casey. That worthy sniffed.

"Purgatory, is it? Sure thin, I won't be lonesome. There's manny a wan that tells the half-trut' that's worse than anny lie that I'll find there with me, I'm thinkin'."

"Why, I thought the Recording Angel accepted any kind of truth-telling, Nora Casey!"

Miss Ferriss smiled, but there was another sniff and a toss of the head from Miss Casey.

"If the Recordin' Angel has any sinse an' knows his bizness, there'll be a lot who do think that way who will have a noo think where its warrum, glory be! It's the foine surprised folks I'll be visitin' with whoile yez are payin' fer the masses, Miss June!"

High over the breakwater the spray leaped, driven by the whips of unseen furies. A greenish after-light that reached across black waters from the horizon seemed to make the heavy pall of night but the darker. Thunderous waves broke and boomed over the sullen rocks, the warring crash hurling its maniac din through the moaning dirge of the winds.

June, bending low to brace her shoulder against the war of elements that beat her back, slowly made progress along the wet causeway and at last she reached a corner of abutting rock that gave a slight shelter.

Shrinking back against this and clinging to the slippery stones, she lifted her face to the storm. The spray drove like whips of cold silk across her lips. The wind closed arms of giant pressure around her and tugged stubbornly and ceaselessly at her body. The illogical battle of unyielding forces—of waters and winds and iron-shouldered shore—raged in chaotic and fearful confusion around her. And over and through and above it all she listened for and answered to the mighty sonorous call of the inland sea.

Out of the fathomless night that lay on the water, it came like a rich organ tone that had gathered its full chord on Olympian heights and rolled it grandly over the deeps. Mysterious, compelling, the night and the storm bore to her the voice, and the girl, flattened like a piece of torn, wet sea-weed against the rocks, straining her eyes through the darkness, thrilled to its mastery and felt in her soul the beat of answering wings.

What was God? She did not know, and of man's interpretations she was indifferent and weary.

But of this—of the voice that dominated this tremendous drama, and the might of it that wakened awe and worship of great things and strong in her soul—of this she knew. And to this she came when a stripling, leaving doll and fairy tale, to crouch in the storm and wonder wide-eyed at its terrible beauty, as she came now to give her soul to it in questioning.

To this she could give homage. The boldly savage strength of these battles that waged through centuries had something huge and clean in it for all its savagery. It was Nature, bare-limbed and bare-breasted, leading her Amazons to war. It was tempest and lightning and thunder; it was ruin, perhaps, and death. It took ships of steel that were years in building and in as few minutes crumpled them like paper toys in mighty fists. It took men of power whose lifted hand swayed, Cæsar-like, the happiness and misery of thousands, and pitched them in derision to the waves as unwanted puppies are pitched into a pond.

All this it did in vast strokes that painted history in splendid, if awful, colours—that wrote its story in characters savage but superb.

And now, in the storm and darkness where the far wailing of the siren struggled fearfully through the

surging undertone of the sea, June Ferriss sought for the meaning, the key of it all. For here there was nothing petty nor vile. In Nature, austere dignity outlived the ages, while of Man—what?

Shifting, change and temporise—unstable as the sands, these were his qualities through all times and all races. Pitted with vices small and great, swarming blindly and breathlessly on toward a goal unseen; hurrying like ants who obey the instinct to hurry but do not know why; scrambling past the dead and climbing up by the dying—this was the unlovely picture that the City gave her, and from this she turned in bewildered distaste to the thunderous orchestration that stunned her ears, but that thrilled heart and soul with its clean majesty.

Death and destruction rode on those black wings that lashed the waters into madness. Death and desolation—the "Maters Tenebrarum"—attended with veiled faces the wild Amazon of the storm. Death and despair sat among its wreckage while dawns of tender and virgin loveliness faltered on tremulous tiptoe on the threshold of splendid day.

Death and magnificence and horror and beauty—a mad and fascinating gamut Nature ran in her many moods and sudden vagaries.

But the mean and small, the unclean and vulgar, the lie and the coward's truth—of these Nature had nothing. She might crush the body—but the spirit she released and lifted on her great wings to heights pure and austere, where bloomed the Edelweiss amid eternal snows.

On June's face the spindrift lay, wet and cold. Her arms ached, and her hands were numb where they clung to the sharp edge of stone. But the vague terror of life

that had gnawed like a rat at her heart all day, began to yield to the war of earth and Heaven that dwarfed her fear and herself with its primal and eternal strife.

Clinging there with the wet collar of her coat against her throat, with her little stout boots braced against the dripping rocks, she dwindled into insignificance and saw herself, a shred of flesh and frieze, caught upon the edge of the world for her little minute, plaything of its storm, a leaf on the winds of its mysteries.

Did anything matter very much, she wondered! Nothing matters much because nothing matters long—that was what it all said to her, this struggle of everlasting waters and everlasting stone. A butterfly of an hour or a Napoleon of a half century—what was either but a grain on the surface of revolving centuries that ground all back into the dust of forgotten things.

Nothing matters much! The wavering beat of the butterfly's wings—the tense battle for power of the Man—both are over with a breath and Life blows the little fleck of dust from her palm.

Nothing matters——!

June drew a long sigh of understanding. The undertone of the waters could always tell her this. The bigness and the cleanness of the storm washed all the fear and temporising from her mind. To give herself in marriage because it offered an asylum were but to write across her soul "Unfit!"

And for the little while—would it pay?

Nothing matters long; and to come back to the Island with the freedom of her girlhood bartered for a price would be but to face her gods with eyes ashamed. The voice of the storm would call to her, but the wings that now stirred in her soul would not answer. It would be to sell her dreams for a mess of pottage—to close down

the great horizon and the wide spaces through which her spirit roamed, to know instead the shuttered house in which her flesh would fatten, as the gold-fettered slave is fattened for the market place.

The greenish light had melted into the black pall that overhung the waters, but the storm clouds were tearing apart raggedly and through a widening rent the moon rolled its sphere of pallid silver. The frantic winds lowered their uproar with uncanny suddenness, leaving but the booming crash of the surf that still reared and fought against the barrier of the breakwater.

The tugging at her body relaxed, and June stretched her aching arms out to ease the bruised muscles and leaned thankfully back to rest. The battle of the storm was over, and behind the turbulent curtain of the sky was the world-old calm of fixed stars looking with eyes cold and serene down on the futile conflict. Beneath their immutable disdain Nature rolled up her scroll of theatric fury in haste.

The waters, still angry and rebellious, were now crested with plumes of snow and pierced with blades of silver. Withdrawn were the Amazons, and in their place a queenly Presence walked upon the troubled waves. All the mysterious and exquisite beauty of the night spread its wings, dusky and gemmed, from horizon to horizon, and the white splendour of the moon thrust back shadow after shadow, from waters to sand, from sand to lagoon, from lagoon to tree of etched ebony against a purple sky.

To the familiar, always-enthralling loveliness, June's soul answered as an instrument tensely keyed. It claimed her, this Night and its hidden gods of war and witchery. For in it the voice of a Master spoke—of an Intelligence above and beyond all human imagination.

She knew herself Pagan—creed and formula left her cold. But on nights like this a desperate craving for the free things that were all around disturbed her. It was to their majesty her spirit answered in worship. She wanted to be one with them. Church and code stifled. They had fed on sorrow and had builded on suppression. They had shackled heart and spirit, and she could find in herself no desire that went out in prayer to power.

But to the splendid bigness of winds that swept over palace and slum with like prodigality—of rain that washed the pink hedge of roses and the dusty alley of the City—of moonlight that sought lifted eyes of patrician and prisoner alike—to these her spirit knelt. These knew nothing of limitations—and the gods of men seemed to be gods of nothing else.

In the low threnody of the winds that now came fitfully over the water, she seemed to hear the sorrows of the world. They waited there behind her, the sorrows that were also to be her sorrows. And while she shrank from them, with the instinctive recoil of the body from pain, her spirit had already put the temptation of the lotus-eater behind her. In expediency she could see a littleness and cowardice that were contemptible.

And lifting her face to the wan whiteness that flowed down on her from the torn clouds, she smiled, even while a creeping shiver went over her. Her gods were there, the gods of the open. They must see her through somehow.

CHAPTER TWELVE

DR. ISAAC MOORE leaned back in his office chair with a particularly ferocious scowl on his face, and tapped the point of a lead pencil abstractedly on his desk. June Ferriss leaned back in an armchair near him, very white but very quiet.

The steady roar of the City forced its way in a heavy monotone through the closed windows and on the windows the rain beat, cutting its slanting way through the grey dust that filmed them.

The doctor's office was not dusty, but it gave the impression of being dusty. The house was old and the furniture was old without being "antique." It was frankly for utility and frankly ugly. There were a good many shabby books in some old-fashioned book-cases, a discouraged-looking bouquet, left by a grateful patient, failed of being beautiful in a hideous Majolica vase and a painted wooden Punchinello grinned in a surprised fashion on top of a huge and shabby safe.

The Punchinello was for the entertainment of juvenile patients. Beside it lay a small china doll wearing one red cotton garment of painful brevity. The doll had but one leg, and a juvenile patient had informed the doctor that morning that he "was all well now, but that his dolly was bwoken and peese mate its foot on aden!"

The doctor's note-book contained an entry to "buy doll, china, black hair, 7 inches, chastely attired in at least two garments."

From under his beetling eyebrows he now looked at his visitor, taking note of the preternatural brilliancy

of the dark eyes in the calm face. The pupils were dilated as though with fear, but the soft lips were firm and the slender, gloved hands rested, motionless, in her lap.

The doctor put the pencil in his pocket. "Good breed, June girl. Eh? I knew your grandfather, you know. Gentleman—scholar—quiet kind. Can't beat 'em." He leaned forward, his spectacles twinkling as he focused his steel-blue eyes on hers.

"Now, what was that Kennedy said? Nothing left? Kennedy's a croaker, you know—a damned old raven. You tell him I said so. And what's the odds? What if there isn't anything left? We'll fix things somehow. Money's a poor asset if you haven't brains with it. Of the two give me brains every time. They will buy money, but money won't buy brains, by heck! Get me? And you have brains. You are the daughter of your father and the granddaughter of the grand old man. They didn't leave you stocks and bonds to buy an emasculated dude with a title trimmed with scrofulous diathesis. But they left you something better. They left you intelligence, and that is something even a rotten bank can't hurt."

The steely eyes squinted and the doctor was silent for a minute. The same "rotten bank" had just added ten years to his sentence of hard labour and he had looked forward yearningly to the time when he could "let go" and apply himself to the beloved laboratory work that was wife and children and home to the lonely bachelor.

But he did not say anything of his own loss. Gently tapping his strong, skilled fingers together he scowled at the daughter of his old friend. And she, mastering the fear that looked out of her eyes, smiled saucily.

"Your trimmy title means three meals in one's 'an-

cestral halls'—as Teddy Tod used to call them—anyhow," she said with a little nod. "You would rather buy germs and microbes and all those other pollywog things that we used to chase in the rain barrel, than the strawberry leaves. But I would rather bind my intellectual brow with the leaves than a headache. And it aches now, Mr. Physician."

The doctor rose to his feet.

"A tablet?" enquired Miss Ferriss, hopefully.

"A tablet!"

The doctor snorted fiercely and stamped off to the next room. June followed, much interested, and murmured a grateful "Oh!"

A little kettle was hissing and bubbling as ferociously as the master of the house and that gentleman was carefully filling a silver tea-ball out of a squatty caddy.

With her cup of fragrant tea June returned to her armchair in the office and the doctor followed. Putting his cup on his desk, he stirred the tea briskly. "Drink, pretty creature, drink," he quoted. "Then we'll talk."

"Well, have you been thinking of Ways and Means?"

The doctor's voice was elaborately casual as he stirred his tea, but the blue eyes shot a piercing glance in June's direction. She laughed a little breathlessly.

"Have I been doing anything else!"

She deliberately drank her tea and set down the cup. Then she leaned forward and it was evident that she was marshalling all her forces to meet an expected strain.

"I may as well tell you that I am in—as Teddy Tod would say—a blue funk. I am scared to death." She managed to smile, but her lips twitched. "The City has changed. It isn't the City of other winters—of theatres and shops and Fifth Avenue parades. I don't know it.

It is forbidding and threatening and I—I am like a cat in a strange garret. I am afraid. Every hydrant is an ogre."

Her eyes turned to the window, to the slanting rain through the film of grime, the wet umbrellas and humped shoulders hurrying by.

"One doesn't know it is big till one comes to make—to fight for a place in it. My place was always ready for me. It was home. But now it is just a strange city of strange people who are all in too much of a hurry to want to bother with outsiders. And I am a rank outsider."

The eyes looking out at the wet street narrowed, and she turned suddenly to the doctor.

"Did you ever realise how little we know—we girls who have homes and have our place in the world made for us? I have been going through the 'Help Wanted' ads in the Herald. It is a good place to have the conceit taken out of you. The City wants 'experienced' people. That word is there oftener than any other. Everything—stores, factories, offices, hotels—wants experience. And until you have had 'experience' what are you to live on?"

She laughed tremulously and shoved her tea-cup forward.

"More tea, you nice doctor man! And I will tell you what life is in a strange city."

The doctor filled her cup and handed it back to her.

"The battle is already on, then?" he said.

"It is already on." The dark eyes smiled over the edge of the cup. "I not only read those ads. I answered some of them. There is the dear dad, and I ought to keep Nora to look after him, and there is myself. And as a wage-earner for three, how much do I appear to be worth, do you suppose?"

The dark eyes twinkled, then Miss Ferriss became grave and added sedately—"The City seems to value my services so far at five dollars a week."

Dr. Moore sat with head soberly nodding. He knew only too well the arithmetic of City earning and City living. It was an arithmetic sternly close; it taught problems that dealt with fractions of fractions. And it called for "experience," in the getting and in the expending, for many thousands of the small craft who skimmed along perilously close to the water line.

"Now," said Miss Ferriss briskly. "When you sent for me I didn't propose to come here and burden you with woes. When I said I was scared to death, I meant it. I am. I'm scared stiff! But that is because it's all new and pretty awful. I can't see any way out so far, but there will have to be a way and I will have to find it, that's all. The being scared is merely incidental. You see, I am only a carpet knight sort of person, after all!"

She shook her head sadly and began to enumerate on her fingers.

"I can talk languages a bit, and sketch a bit, and write essays a bit and make music a bit. But I have never specialised on anything. I do things to my own hats and make over my own gowns and they look better, if I do say it as shouldn't. But the 'technique' is so much Sanskrit. There I'm lost. And my versatility has no market value. Nobody wants it. The City wants specialists."

She got up restlessly and moved across the room to the safe, where she picked up the Punchinello and shook his bells viciously in the direction of the doctor.

"Not that I am admitting that I am a fool, O, learned physician! This summing up of what I can't do, is largely to clear my own mind of *dolce far niente* cobwebs. For there is a mind there, you will please take notice! And

it isn't whipped—yet. The world isn't mine, but it owes me a living and if it means a fight—well, I'll fight."

She nodded for emphasis and cradled the grinning Punchinello under her soft chin. Over the painted toy, the anatomist noted the curve that ran from lower lip to white throat, with satisfaction. In the eyes' depths fear lurked, the lips were tender, the brow dreaming and sensitive. But the chin was not the chin of a weakling, and he sighed with blended trouble and content.

"Keep your wits for defence. You will need both, for it's a waiting game, this little affair where you have matched up with the world. It isn't always to the strong—it sometimes breaks their hearts! But it is to the strong and stubborn. It means keeping your thought wholesome and sane in a morass and Bedlam. Can you do it?"

"How do I know?—I will try!"

CHAPTER THIRTEEN

IN the silence that followed, her eyes watched the rain that slithered across the dim window-pane. On the Island it was coming down in a clear, silver curtain, whipping from the lagoons an answering spray of dancing drops and beating the sand into a coverlet of gleaming satin. The wet wind was as bracing as wine and rich with the odours of earth and wild grasses. It had a delight all its own, a day of rain on the Island, where the skies bent in phantom mists to the waves.

But on the city window-panes—was there anything lonelier or sadder?

"June Ferriss, as you have modestly stated, you are not a fool. You have a fair supply of intelligence, and intelligence will do things where diplomas won't. I have an idea."

The doctor thrust his hands in his trouser pockets and walked up and down the office a few times, thinking deeply. June watched him closely but in silence, and the muscles of her hand were tense where she clasped the arm of her chair.

"My practice is among neither the rich nor the poor. It is among all of the very many intermediate classes. Sometimes I send patients to fairly expensive sanatoriums and sometimes to the free wards of the city hospitals. But frequently I have patients whom I send to private places. Perhaps they live in hotels, or apartment houses, or they are theatrical people or something of that sort. Anyhow, they want hospital or home care, and they won't go to a hospital, and haven't a home. So I have

to tuck them away somewhere while I look after them."

Dr. Moore paused in front of June and his blue eyes transfixed her through his bright spectacles.

"One of these private hospitals, or homes, was run by an old patient of mine, Mrs. Harris. She is going out to California to live with a daughter who married and moved there. What do you say to you and Nora taking her house?"

June looked steadily back into the keen eyes that held hers with cool, professional appraisal.

"If you would trust us! I would be awfully grateful, doctor."

Dr. Moore grunted and sat down again at his desk.

"You supply good sense and Nora will help lift the heavy end—and I will attend to the directions. That will make a working team. Your nerves are all right. I've watched you! And you will get along. It won't be easy and you know it, so we won't discuss that. But you will be able to keep your father with you, and I will be able to keep an eye on him. You will learn more about things you already know and you will learn a good many things you don't know. But it won't hurt you. Knowledge of any kind is an asset."

His eagle-shaped nose was rubbed fiercely with a strong forefinger.

"It will be hard—hard as the devil," he said crossly. "But it will be a plank. It will hold you up for awhile, even if the splinters do tear those nice white hands of yours."

"Well, those nice white hands are going to make some more tea, you snappy thing," replied Miss Ferriss calmly as she went after the kettle. When she came back and stood replenishing the tea-ball, she nodded warningly —"And if you don't treat the nice matron of this exclu-

sive sanatorium with proper respect, I will feed your pet patient nitro-glycerine. So, now!"

She laughed saucily, then very suddenly dropped the tea-ball, sat down in the armchair sideways and held her face against the back of it. The doctor rescued the little silver trinket and put it in her cup, then poured the hot water on it.

Then he turned snappishly.

"Cry, do you hear? It's got to come, so get it over with."

The soft lips were pressed together in a white line for a long minute, then she turned and faced him.

"I won't do it!" She flashed defiance at him with wet eyes. "I hate weepy women. And it's just because I'm tired and couldn't eat any breakfast and this is all a relief. I couldn't see any way out. I knew there had to be one—there *had* to be one! But I couldn't find it. I was just floundering in the middle of the Atlantic and it was so horribly big and cold! And I want my tea. And I want *two* lumps!" she wailed.

"What for? Do you think I am made of sugar!" he demanded. "There are your two lumps and they have spoiled your tea. Did you ever see a Chinaman putting sugar in his tea? They have some sense. Women haven't any sense. Women don't know enough to——"

"When can we move in, you nice thoughtful man?" asked Miss Ferriss sweetly.

"As soon as you like, and the sooner the better."

The steely eyes flashed back and focussed on her face again.

"It will be life's seamy side, June Ferriss. The ugly side, much of it," he warned. "And we could think up some other plank, perhaps."

The hands *were* white and the brow dreaming and

sensitive, after all. And under the ferocious exterior, his heart failed him. Must she learn that ugly side in all of its ugliness, this girl he had told fairy tales to but yesterday! Wasn't there some other way out? He had no illusions left, this doctor of sick bodies and sick souls. The ugly side he knew, rag and patch and stain! His own dreaming and fancies were so far in the past, the present so grimly packed with duties leaden colour with sorrow, where they were not crimson with sin!

They had crowded out everything else, and the threnody of that City sea called to him and claimed him, sorrowfully inexorable.

"Perhaps we had better wait a day or so. We might think up a better way——"

His voice trailed off into an uneasy cough and June's laugh rang out with a clear and genuine ring that brightened the shabby room like a rift of sudden sunlight.

"Talk about back-sliders!" she jeered. "Who's showing the white feather now? And I am getting ready to get over my stage fright. The best medicine is to be busy, so, physician, heal thyself! Nora and I will give you an imitation of two lovely ladies running a sanatorium as it ought to be run. Watch us!"

A white, slender hand was held out to him and as his own closed over it, she looked down at the clasped hands with a twinkle.

"Steady as a church! Not a tremor nor a flutter. Pulse even, hand cool. Needle records that the mind is occupied with the vagaries of moving men and the wisdom of an early gas deposit."

Then the twinkle softened and the eyes grew misty.

"You are an awful brick, you know, Doctor Ike!" she said gently.

CHAPTER FOURTEEN

THE year following was a year of grim realities that often seemed weirdly unreal. Mr. Ferriss took little heed of the change of home. Nora shouldered the heavier burdens with the cheerful adaptability of her race, while June met the changing and irregular responsibilities with resolution that flinched often, but that forced itself on.

The idiosyncrasies of all types of patient called upon the tact of good breeding and also upon the large view of good common sense that keeps itself armoured against inevitable annoyances. Nursing the sick was not sentimentalism. It had woefully little of the redeeming glamour of romance.

The pretty white-capped young women familiar in magazine pictures, always looked wonderfully starched and unwrinkled. They appeared to be invariably dimpled and demure with little curling tendrils of hair trying to escape from a dainty little cap that tried hard to look official and severe.

But in real life June learned what it was to fight through long hours that took no note of time, when a pulse fluttered thread-like and threatened to flutter out at the first relaxing of vigilance. She learned the weariness of stubborn fighting through long night watches, that had nothing of glory in it. She learned how surprisingly much her body and brain could be over-taxed and imposed upon, and yet respond to the call of her will.

If the great army of physicians is a noble one, waging its unceasing warfare against pain and death, that auxili-

ary army of women plays its gallant part, fully equal in importance, when it stands at attention and then follows orders to the breaking point of endurance and beyond.

Attractive and unattractive, patient and impatient, grateful and ungrateful—the little procession of the sick made its way to the quiet, old-fashioned house that seemed to shrink in mournful protest between the sky-scraper wholesale houses that hemmed it in. Once upon a time a stately home on a street of other homes as stately, it was now left behind as the City marched steadily North. The wholesale houses and "loft" buildings, where were manufactories of articles as familiar in the magazines as the pretty pictured nurses, were forcing their way always on, and they had driven out the homes of old-time hospitality and closed in around the narrow brown-stone house with its iron grilled area-way and high stone steps, leaving it seemingly forgotten.

During the day the surging monotone of commerce beat against the shuttered windows, crescendo and then diminuendo; but at night that quarter of the City sank into something resembling quiet, broken only by the intermittent roar of the elevated a block away.

Friends or neighbours there were none. And June learned that, for complete isolation, Sahara itself could not be superior to a great city.

Her charges represented all classes, and the sudden and severe tax on her strength was compensated for in a large degree by the pathos and bathos that marked the passing days. Around on the noisy avenue, where the elevated trains thundered and the surface cars clanged brazen gongs and enormous freight vans plunged and rumbled, was a little colony of tradesfolk—Italian, German, French, Hebrew—a many-tongued people who accepted its mixed condition with cheerful philosophy and

sank its differences in an argot of "the Avenue" familiar to all and exclusive to none.

Here Nora and June did their daily marketing and soon found themselves drawn, with democratic warmness, into the circles of friendly interests that held this little world together and kept it human in that vast and cold world known as the City.

And wrested from the City's octopus clutch, a small triangle of "park" fought bravely to keep country-like, and its seventeen trees and its grass that managed to keep quite green through most of the summer, made day-times a good gathering place for those too old or too young to work. Evenings, the little world packed its benches and sat on its dusty grass and strolled around on the gritty asphalt paths.

Here Mr. Ferriss was reasonably safe and quite content, and every fine day was escorted there and left to dreamily watch the children and listen, perhaps, with his fine and unfailing courtesy to some garrulous old *grosmutter* homesick for the Vaterland and striving to warm rheumatic age with memories of days when she was a *mädchen* in the fields in the old country.

Meantime Nora cooked and swept, and June poured oil on irritable nerves, listened to protests, soothed pains and perplexities, and dragged a wearied body to lie prone in aching exhaustion on the narrow iron bed in the small room she reserved for herself, at irregular intervals. For night and day frequently meant nothing to her. Nora did the work of cook, housemaid and housekeeper and then often had to be driven to bed with glib assurances that "every one was settled for the night."

And after the heavy and weary tread had toiled back downstairs to the maid's room off the basement dining

room, June's labour of the day would be repeated through the night.

She learned to sleep in snatches—to sleep with her head dropped on the windowsill for a ten-minute respite when feverish and fretful sick folk dozed fitfully. She learned to wake with all her senses alert at the faintest stir of a sheet, or at a long-drawn breath. She learned, when night watches brought her to the breaking point, that two swallows of thin, cold gruel, taken several times an hour all night, would ward off fainting. She learned, when she had a pleurisy case and had to ease the patient back to her pillow by inches after agonising coughing, that the threatening faint could be driven back even at the last minute by grinding her teeth together on her inner lip till the blood ran. It made her very sick, it is true, but the faint was side-tracked and the patient was not neglected. And her life was now made up of the one dumb and dogged effort, day and night, to pull her sick through to the "discharged" that brought its dull sort of comfort in the knowledge of a duty done.

The wife of a Methodist minister from a small town upstate occupied one room, at a time when a pretty little broncho-rider, with the delicate face of a Dresden doll, wrists and arm muscles of steel and an astonishing vocabulary, occupied the room next. Across the hall a newspaper artist lay in the dark with bandaged eyes, and counted days and dollars while he waited for the verdict.

When the verdict came and he had no more dollars to count, he gave up the room—but not the darkness, which would go with him now for life—and he was swallowed up in the City sea.

The wife of a commercial traveller had his room next and her baby was born there. A gambler took the room of the Methodist minister's wife when she went home,

and a book-binder from a Bible publishing house had the pretty little broncho-rider's room when they took her away to be buried.

Others in turn followed these and June usually had from one to three patients. Occasionally she had none, and then the tension would relax with a snap and she would creep into the little iron bed and stay there as long as she could, to store up enough energy for the coming work while, like the artist, she anxiously counted days and dollars.

For she found it impossible to save. Rent and expenses were high and prosperous months alternated with dull ones.

Then came a day when Dr. Ike's beloved laboratory turned traitor. The newspapers headlined largely about "another brave martyr to science," a brother laboratory-worker and embryo martyr bought his books, and a second-hand man bought his furniture. And when everything was settled up there was just enough left to cover the modest cost of cremation.

The rain slithered across the dim windows in the same depressing way that it had a year before when Dr. Ike made tea for her and snapped her head off and steered her into a safe harbour for the time being.

June could see the little copper kettle from where she sat listening numbly to the hurried clergyman who tried not to appear hurried. Quite a gathering of the medical fraternity also sat and appeared to listen and tried not to look hurried. But the call of the City harassed them—it beat into the closed house from that tide that ebbed and flowed and never stopped. It was the call that cared nothing for death—the dead were of the Past just as soon as they were dead, and the City was too hurried to linger over a closing door.

Dr. Ike did not seem to mind, however. His face was like old ivory and it looked indifferent and wonderfully rested. His researches were over and what he had learned he had passed on to those younger and still enthusiastic. What he had not learned—well, he had not learned, that was all. He had groped toward the light, but hands brawny and scrawny and blistered and calloused—hands bony and starved and weak—had held him back with their weakness.

They would not let him seek the light, and the stolen hour with its tubes and tests had turned and struck back with fangs.

And now they were fastening down the black cover over the face that looked like old ivory and the physicians were furtively looking at their watches and the clergyman was stamping his feet into goloshes.

And June shrank back against the wall as the scuffling procession went out into the slanting rain; carriage doors slammed briskly and eager horses started away on a hurried trot. The second-hand man was already in the basement engaged in a heated argument with the janitor who stoutly defended his rights to perquisites.

Dr. Ike was not only very suddenly dead, but already engulfed, and to-morrow would be hardly remembered. June looked around the dusty office, dry-eyed but with a hard ache clutching her throat. On the big safe filled with its records and notes the Punchinello grinned impishly, his pointed cotton collar tipped with little brass bells half over his head, half hanging down over the edge of the safe.

With a sudden, hot anger in her heart, June picked up the toy and thrust it under her raincoat. Dr. Ike had often gravely given it to her "to play with" while she waited till he was through with his office patients and

they could sit down for a restful cup of tea and a comforting visit. She could not endure the thought of rough contempt pitching it out, a faded toy. The poignant pathos of inanimate things long familiarly used by hands suddenly grown very still, gripped her. The little trivial nonsense that they had dragged forward with grim courage to leaven the labour that bore them both down, seemed now of supreme importance. They would give battle for a stubborn case together, hour after hour, grey-faced and tight-lipped. Then, the battle won, they would go over symptoms and "case-history" haggard but glad, while they sipped fragrant Oolong and abused each other viciously and affectionately.

"You, of course, did very well, you know, you dear thing," June would concede generously. "But it was really my scientific nursing that pulled the poor man through."

"Just how any of my patients managed to live at all before you came to manage things, is something I cannot understand," Dr. Moore would reply with elaborate sarcasm.

"Me too!" Miss Ferriss would agree with a puzzled shake of the head. "Though, of course, Nature will do wonders if not interfered with too much by well-meaning gentlemen who need the money."

The fight would then be on, a brisk interchange of cannister, to wind up in a gay peal of laughter and a ferocious snort as one or the other went down under a lucky shot. Weariness, depression, anxiety and dread were routed in the brisk war of words over which the Punchinello presided with his friendly and knowing grin. The morrow with its new effort, its impending strain of nerve and muscle, was yet the morrow. The hour of respite held the soothing little kettle, the peppery quip, the

humorous flash of friendly eyes. And the plodding physician, longing for the laboratory mysteries as a lover for the subtle charm of his mistress, would settle the yoke once more on his shoulders with a shrug of resignation.

And June thrust back the knowledge of a good constitution being imposed upon and of a warning pain that stabbed. Broken rest, lifting of heavy, inert bodies, many trips a day up and down stairs, were the things that meant, sooner or later, a day of reckoning.

CHAPTER FIFTEEN

BUT she was between two stone walls and there was no opening but the narrow way and no turning back. So she held her teeth together when the pain stabbed, and taught her features and her eyes to remain tranquil.

With Dr. Moore, as with Mr. Ferriss and Nora, she was always cheerfully interested and no one suspected the flagging strength that gave no sign.

But now, as she held the small wooden head of the toy against her breast and looked around at the worn, familiar old furniture, eloquent of a good friend gone, of a comradeship ended, she quailed.

It had been her council-chamber, her refuge. With all its shabbiness it was a garden from which she returned comforted and strengthened. It had meant a citadel that held wisdom and protection. The cloud through which her father's once keen eyes now looked in patient perplexity; Nora's limitations, loyal and devoted though she was; the anxieties and dangers that burdened the days and nights—all these she could cope with with a certain fortitude while she had that shabby office to go to and chummily "talk things over."

And that, in Life's endlessly turning kaleidoscope, was dissolving.

June groped her way through the dark hall to the door. Dr. Ike used to open it for her and thump her smartly on the back as she went out, with the information that "She'd do!" And she stood still in the dark with her head drooped forward against the old walnut panel.

One evening several months after Dr. Moore's death, June sent weary Nora to bed and went to her own room to think things over. It was easier to think in the dark, and saved gas, so June stretched her own tired limbs on the narrow bed beside the one window that faced a street oddly quiet.

The sky glare of the City reflected back its ochre tinge over the crude glare of the electrics, and the roar of passing trains on the elevated swept hastily down the cañon-street from the Avenue and died as hastily away again.

Uptown the City was joyous—ablaze with light and athrill with song and laughter. But here in her plain little room June saw it only as something huge and sinister. With hard work and with a strong and steady friend beside her, she had managed to shoulder back that vague Something that brooded with ominous wings and unsleeping eyes over the women who toiled.

But the friend was taken and the desultory patients sent by other physicians were not enough to keep things even. City rents were appallingly high, and the little reserve fund that had been comforting to think of, melted rapidly.

They were not keeping even—they were going steadily behind. And now Nora, the faithful, was wanted at home, where her old mother was trying to realise that a fall down two steps had made her a cripple for the rest of her life with a fractured hip.

Nora must go. Nothing short of a miracle would supply some one else who would labour for them as she had done. Patients were fewer, the rent due monthly and a lease that had an alarming time yet to run, complicated matters. And even if she gave up the house, where would she go and what would she do?

A wave of utter, deadly weariness rolled over, like a tangible sluggish thing. She flung her arms out beside her and twisted her head far back on the pillow. Anxiety, loneliness, weariness—they were not enough, for the pain that had now become her familiar, that once stabbed, now bored dully and steadily into her side.

Unknown to Dr. Moore, she had consulted a *confrere* who was a specialist. An injury obscure at the time of the motor accident, had slowly but inexorably made itself evident since. And there was no cure. She had insisted upon a cold-blooded diagnosis, and looking into her steady, compelling eyes, the surgeon, rather to his own astonishment, had given it.

Her thought leaped back to the Island—to the colony that foregathered there year after year, merry, warm-hearted, well-bred people still faithful to old-fashioned traditions that were as simple and fragrant as dried lavender. The homes were not sea-coast palaces. They were all "about of a muchness" as Mr. Todhunter used to say—very comfortable, with couches where a fellow could kick his heels without danger of injuring brocades or mahogany. The servants were mostly "old timers" who had not a little to say to the family regarding the family affairs and whose criticisms were received meekly.

It was all safe and pleasant and shielded from anything that savoured of the "seamy side" of life. Its weeks and months of prolonged spring and summer and fall were all so serenely alike and yet never for a moment monotonous. It was the lotus-eating of gentle women and quiet men satisfied with the home of gentle courtesies and with their old ideals that looked upon the modern loudness and display with grave distaste.

The world's harsher side they knew of only in a vague way—in a way quite impersonal. It was beyond their

ken, out of their orbit, and it simply never occurred to them that they were or might be concerned in any way with problems that had always existed and that were not their problems.

Church and charity were given to dutifully and as a matter of course, just as sweeping day was Friday and the Town homes were boarded up in early spring for the annual transfer of household altars to the Island.

It was safe—and the girl lying in the dark caught her lips between her teeth with a sharp, indrawn breath. An ugly thought crouched at the threshold of her mind. She would not let it in, but it was there waiting with sardonic patience—the subtle, insidious "What's the use!" that marks the first slight vibration of yielding barriers.

The winds and the waves and the free things that were to her church and creed—the gods and dryads of great spaces and dim forests and austere mountain sides—these seemed withdrawn and far away. She did not belong to them here in this brawling City where thousands fought frenziedly just to labour and keep the breath in their bodies. And for what? What had the long months of hard toil given her? Food and brief hours of rest only to enable her to struggle back to her feet and lift the yoke back on galled shoulders.

Laughter, relaxation, pleasure—of these she knew nothing except as memories fast dimming. Toil that bore with it the terror of losing the chance to toil—the bitter irony of this twisted her tight-drawn lips in a wry smile. Toil that was joyless she was yet clinging to with desperate fingers. Toil that brought her no promise of relief, that did not build anything but the daily plank from uncertainty to uncertainty—this with its garnishment of pain and flagging vitality was her portion.

Here were no gods nor dreams nor ideals. This was but paying dogged tribute to brutal necessity.

It was not striving that climbed slowly but surely to the stars. It was only the bending of slave shoulders to the City's twelve-thonged whip. She breathed the dust of the feet of an army of slaves who sweated and fought and suffered as she sweated and fought and suffered. They stumbled and fell and were engulfed, but the City spawned new slaves who scrambled and fought for their places. It was a Bedlam-labour where cries and oaths and moans in strange tongues rose and fell as the merciless lash of starving belly and shivering limb drove them on.

It was a din, a horror, a shambles, and above it amused men and delicate ladies looked on with slightly mocking, slightly bored eyes, as the patrician men and women of Nero's amphitheatre looked on where dust and blood mingled.

They did not care because they could not understand. And understanding is reached only by the way of pain.

To those who have not known that Via Dolorosa, Life does not speak. To them there is but a spectacle that they see but do not comprehend. Its tragedies only look vulgar and its sorrows grotesquely shallow, and its virtues overshadowed by its roughness and dirt.

June, caught in its iron teeth like a delicate ermine in a trap, struggled in all her senses against its tyranny. The trap she could see all around her, with here a song-bird, there a rat, there again a sea-gull breaking its great wings in anguished astonishment. It did not discriminate, this machine of hellish manufacture, and the senseless sacrifice, the blood of weak and strong, of tired and vicious, of brave and bad—all this in its vast and complete stupidity steeped her soul in aloes-bitterness.

From a room at the back the thin wail of a child came faintly. It was three days old and its mother was the only patient in the house. She was a pretty, clinging sort of creature with wide, appealing eyes and a weak chin. And though she had come as Mrs. Herman Clausen, she had very soon told June the whole story of world-old trust and world-old betrayal.

Her passionate love for her mother, whose fine, sweet face was framed and on the stand by her bed, redeemed her vacillation and delicate shallowness somewhat in June's eyes, and for the sake of the mother who did not know, June mothered the little creature with patience and tenderness. The marriage that had been always put off for elaborately sufficient reasons, was of course to take place now as soon as the young mother was strong enough to go to some quiet little church that Mr. Clausen would select.

Then the date would be given as a year previous, when wilful little Ida Lake had wrung the consent of her parents to her coming to the City for a year's vocal lessons.

She had been chaperoned as much as busy city people have time for chaperoning independent young people from small towns, and consequently had not found it difficult to shift arrangements and quarters till she was practically free from espionage. Mr. Clausen made the suggestions and supervised the shifting, and while she was very much in love with him, she was also much in awe, and rather afraid of him.

To June, she was of the Ben Bolt's "Sweet Alice" class. She wept with delight when he gave her a smile and trembled with fear at his frown. And June had a large disdain for the type in the flesh—the song you could get away from if you had to.

But she had listened to the sobs and explanations and rhapsodies, mingled in true April fashion, patiently sympathetic, while she wondered in weary amazement how any normal man of average intelligence could possibly endure a second evening of her immature babbling.

Mr. Clausen had been "away on some business matter" and had returned to the City that evening. Nora had admitted him when he called at the house to see the childish mother and her baby, and June, very weary and disinterested, would have preferred not meeting him.

But some feverish symptoms that day had been regarded rather closely by the attending physician, and he had ordered the administering of a remedy every two hours till the patient went to sleep for the night.

By the signal light that flashed across the sky from a city tower, June saw that the hour for the next dose had come. So with a long sigh, she drew herself slowly to her feet and going along the silent hall, tapped softly at Mrs. Clausen's door. It had been over an hour since she had heard the child's weak cry, and the murmur of voices was very low in the closed room. The deeper bass of the man's voice had come to June's unheeding ears steadily—he seemed to have a good deal to say, and the soft treble of June's patient broke in only at long intervals and then haltingly.

At June's tap, the voices fell to silence and the moment was perceptibly long before the door opened. The man who drew to one side with a courteous bow as June entered, was of medium height. June's incurious glance noted only that he was of the obviously "well groomed" class, that the eyes behind the brightly polished glasses were rather close together and the ears were not as close-set to the head as they should have been.

Otherwise, Mr. Clausen was of the familiar, pleasantly mannered type that was as inconspicious as a well-chosen and subdued wall paper—which is the kind one does not see.

Recognising him with a grave bend of her head, June passed at once to the side of the bed where she lifted a bottle and spoon from the stand.

"It is time for your medicine, Mrs. Clausen," she said pleasantly. "And I will give the baby hers. Is she awake?"

The young mother lying flat on her pillows did not reply nor make any move to assist as June gently drew back the wrapping from the tiny form at her side. The silence was oddly disturbing, but June turned and moved the shaded drop-light so that its rays were directed on mother and child.

"Why, she is sleeping—and very soundly," she said, bending over the bed.

"Mrs. Clausen wrote me that the child was fretful, so I brought a sleeping potion for it." The voice behind her was quite steady and quite expressionless, but the import of its message, that was neither in words nor inflection, leaped like a narrow flame from the man's mind to hers. Her eyes flashed to a strange bottle, half empty, on the stand and from the bottle to the child.

Looking at it with a fascination that grew with every thick pound of the blood through her heart, she could yet see the white face with its weak chin on the pillow—the blue, watchful eyes, the small, clenched hand in which a fold of the sheet was twisted.

With a superhuman effort, June fought the numbness that weighed her limbs as with heavy chains. Her mouth was dry, gritty as though dusted with sand, but resolutely she drew the inner lip between her teeth and ground

upon it. The warm taste of blood nauseated, but she bit again into the flesh and a prickling in her hands followed. Heavily she turned and faced the man standing motionless behind her. He met her look without a change of his pleasantly attentive expression, but his eyes held hers with a significant eloquence beyond all words.

"It was, of course, an accident, you know!"

In the shaded light of the room June stood quite still, trying to steady into some coherence the horror of thoughts that whirled in a drunken sort of Carmagnole through her brain. And while she stood there the others waited, the eyes of the man and of the girl on the bed fastened watchfully on her face, grown suddenly grey-white and haggardly old.

Murder has an ugly sound that the comfortably conventional shrink from as something that is not only a crime, but a crime that cannot under any circumstances be condoned by good society. Even the old-time fashion of "avenging one's honour" indulged in by suddenly enlightened husbands has quite gone out. Murder occurs, but it is always vaguely impersonal and associated chiefly with the thought of large type and the smell of printers' ink.

This was murder—this little vial of soothing syrup and the tiny, blue-white face and little wrinkled fist that the circle of light from the reading lamp shone on. The baby was dead before it knew anything of life, and the problem of life and death and of relative values was drumming in June's ears thunderously. The quiet bedroom with its litter of silver toilet trinkets, its two roses in a slender crystal vase, its pleasant clutter of magazines and blue silk negligee and little blue silk *"mules"* on the ottoman beside the foot of the bed—into it had entered

the mystery in ghastly guise. It was the stage where tragedy and stealth looked with basilisk eyes through a mask that man may not raise and live. And the creeping horror of the unknown—of the act that had thrust a life, small and helpless, into the black void of that Unknown—seemed to stain blood-red the toy fripperies because they had witnessed murder.

June, with the blood taste in her mouth and the sharp pain warring with the recurrent waves of sick blackness that threatened to overwhelm her, reached out a shaking hand and drew a fold of the soft lambswool blanket over the baby's face. She could not think while the light showed so pitilessly the pinched look that Death's touch had left on the tiny chiselled nose.

As she covered the child, a small, desperate hand clutched her skirt.

"My mother—she doesn't know. She mustn't know—oh, in God's name—in God's name!——"

The hoarse whisper crossed the drumming that seemed to stun June's ears and mind. Murder—it was murder, and to give the man waiting by the door over to the law was justice. That was what was always done with murderers.

The pictured woman with the fine, sweet face—the cowering little creature on the bed—they, too, would be caught in the gin and crushed, but that could not be helped. The law knew nothing of compromise nor evasion.

Other fathers in the City—thousands of them yearly—merely deserted the child. It grew up or starved—on its life, if it lived, the stain of bastardy. And the father was not hunted down because he was merely a deserter, not a murderer.

From under her burning lids June saw beyond the

vast army of those left to live in the City slums. Their withered, unloved, old-young faces; their hungry, wise eyes; their weary, wicked mouths, she knew line for line. What gift was life to them? What waited, but the unthinkable things that crouched and sprang and spewed this spawn of lust into dive and brothel and pestilence ward!

Her hand closed with sudden fierceness on the little waxen hand and she turned to the man who watched her.

"Go to the Avenue and get a taxi-cab. I will have Mrs. Clausen ready in ten minutes."

The man drew a long breath, then the bedroom door opened and closed behind him.

Securely wrapped in a long cloak, the girl-mother was carried down the old-fashioned walnut staircase in Clausen's arms. June Ferriss followed, groping heavily along the banister with one hand. On her left arm lay the small shawled form of a child.

Out through the old-fashioned vestibule, down the brown, sandstone steps, across the stone sidewalk to the waiting motor Clausen carried his slight burden. The chauffeur touched his cap and sympathetically assisted with rugs and cushions. Then Clausen turned.

"I can take the baby now, Miss Ferriss. And Mrs. Clausen and I are under deep obligations for your splendid care. Thank you very much—and good-night!"

In the light of the motor lamps the chauffeur saw the lady smile as she replied "Good-night!" But the smile did not reach her eyes and the sympathetic motorist told himself that she was certainly "all in."

Going back up the staircase, June's knees doubled under her twice, but she pulled herself desperately up to her own room. There she crumpled on the floor by the window, with one arm flung out and grasping the sill. With her head fallen forward on the arm where the cool

night air could sweep over her face, she lay still and battled with the sickness of life that at last conquered and beat her down.

In his room Mr. Ferriss lay calmly sleeping, now, as by day, walled from her by the mysterious barrier the mind had entrenched itself behind. The old house was surcharged with the sadness of old stateliness fallen into shabbiness and neglect. It had outlived its generation and its kind and was in the way. And now its walls burned red with a word repeated as that on the walls of the prison where Robespierre wandered restlessly, reading the word that accused and peering at the phantoms in the corners.

She, June Ferriss, had condoned the murder and had let the murderer go free. In the abstract crime was a matter that called for seizure and punishment. But punishment has not abolished crime and the threat of punishment has not prevented it. Consequently, punishment accomplished no general good and imprisonment did no specific good.

So the question of relative values rose out of the mental and physical chaos, and in the chaos June saw the patient eyes in the silver frame; the irresponsible, suffering bit of thistledown on the bed; the baby saved from the world's brand of bastardy and from the world's brutality.

The man was unimportant. The men who deserted the living and suffering were not only criminals but cowards, yet they were permitted to roam at large and breed their kind. This man was a criminal but he was not a coward. "Some kill their loves when they are young, and some when they are old—the kindest use a knife because the dead so soon grow cold—" It was a criminal who wrote that in an English prison. And to

June Death and Life had readjusted. Life was punishment, death release. The baby was safe. The world's brand of bastardy that awaited it at birth made that world more of a criminal, worse a murderer, than the man whose potion sent it from sleep to sleep.

For the world and its stupidities she was learning an amazed and immeasurable contempt. It strained out gnats and swallowed camels with a vast and self-satisfied solemnity that defied all logic and left the crudest analysis dumb.

Crouching by the window, June listened to the City's heavy and sullen monotone. The darkness of the room crowded down on her, athrill with horror, and her left arm seemed still to ache with the motionless little burden it had just held. But out of the pain and weariness that had beaten her down for long and unrelenting months, the revolt of the child of long ago had battled with dumb and bitter resolve.

Horror held her senses and sanded her mouth—horror and weakness rooted in age-old superstitions and ignorance held her quaking under the night's black wings. But that "other woman" in the corner was watching her with derisive eyes, and under the steady gaze, as under the stinging flick of a whip, a slow warmth of fighting blood forced its way through her fear-palsied limbs.

The "relative values" caught at suddenly and desperately, had ceased dancing in firefly flickers of light. Out of slow revolt her spirit reached stubbornly for basic truths, pitching aside with the impatience of pain the sophistries and makeshifts that satisfied the mob. She sought the lodestar—no lesser light would do.

And seeking it, the hysterical panic that fought for utterance like an East Side tenement Medusa shrieking "Police!" was held by the throat.

Pulling herself up to her knees, June leaned against the window frame and rubbed the arm where the dead baby had lain. She was weary, sick, and burdened with the weight of the morrow's responsibilities and uncertainty. But of the night and its decisions she could find in no cranny of her mind a lurking stain of fear.

She had spared the girl and the girl's mother and in so doing had defied the law. But she paid herself no tribute of sentimental admiration. She had not defied the law because of a romantic sense of mercy for two helpless women. She had defied it because of a tired contempt for its quibbles and of the bungling absurdities of its arithmetic.

She knew there were those who saw its absurdities as she did, but who yielded to them with a shrug of the shoulders as the easiest way. But this was not her way. The law was huge and might break her, perhaps. But it could not now bend the spirit of the little girl who had looked up into the face of authority and had said, "I don't believe you."

CHAPTER SIXTEEN

A FEW streets down from where June's hospital had been, Mrs. Henry lived and rented rooms. In the old-fashioned house that she had rented from the days when the last of the "old families" were moving out, the rooms were wonderfully high and spacious. White marble mantels and elaborately fluted cornices spoke still of bygone grandeur, but Mrs. Henry had thriftily bisected the spacious rooms with matched-board partitions, painted, the two-out-of-one renting readily to down-town patrons.

As Mrs. Henry was scrupulously neat and her rooms made up in cleanliness for the bisected grandeur, she was well patronised by "steadies" as well as seasonal roomers who faithfully returned.

When June gave up the hospital, the sale of its contents paid outstanding bills and what the landlord demanded for the balance of the lease. Nora went home, and as kindly Mrs. Henry had one section of a room vacant, she took Mr. Ferriss and promised to look after him till some arrangements could be made.

June was ill and realised that a few days' absolute quiet was a necessity. And she found it in St. Michaels "Residence for Ladies" which was in connection with a down-town convent, a stone's throw from Mrs. Henry's.

Pagan though she was, she yet had frequently attended the services in the little chapel which connected the convent, facing on one street, with the Residence which faced on the next. The stately calm of the Latin ritual, the dimly lit chapel with the soft candle flame touching the altar into subdued radiance, the bowed forms of tired

business women praying in the stillness—all this soothed and rested her. In that atmosphere of detachment, of the peace of devout faith, she could get away for an hour from the City life that dinned its pain and problems into her ears unceasingly.

A receptive quality that she possessed, that sympathised and never questioned, had always brought out the life-complexities and burdens of her patients. Her own anxieties were as guarded a part of her as had been the small room in which she shut herself and her weariness when she dared take the time. It would have been as impossible for her to even touch upon her inner life to others as it would have been to expose a wounded breast to strange and curious eyes.

But she gave herself to them without heeding that she gave without receiving back again, and when vitality ran low and exhaustion laid its heavy hand on body and soul, the two years of convent life that had marked part of her girlhood called her, as a homing pigeon, back to the convent's quietude as to sanctuary.

So the nuns had grown to know the girl with tired eyes that smiled at them with humorous affection, and the Mother Superior's *"Bon soir, ma fille!"* always greeted her with very genuine interest.

The convent itself consisted of three one-time private homes in the solid city block, but the Residence was modern and ten stories high. And on one of the highest floors June Ferriss thankfully retreated to an immaculate little room with a narrow iron bed and with quiet grey-tinted walls.

The City swam in panoramic distances far below. Its noises beat upward but faintly to the height of June's window, and she felt safe, though her breast ached

as that of a spent runner fallen within protecting walls and craving desperately an hour's respite.

For her, Life was already writing itself in heavy characters and the days unrolled new things that cut and corroded into her consciousness relentlessly. And the easier path always lay open and inviting did she wish to turn to it. But a touch of stoic temper in her held her to the way of pain that meant Vision, even though sight must come through torment.

And so the easier path tempted little and she gave herself only the needed hour for muscles overstrained and for heart and nerves twisted like a violin string to the breaking key.

A long day she lay on the narrow bed, inert and almost unthinking. Under the quiet of reaction, the knowledge that she was adrift and anchorless was dulled to a something unimportant and to be thrust back for future consideration. The mind recognised a condition threatening and imminent but refused to care. Mind and limbs were alike motionless. They drifted high above the world and its affairs, attuned only to the long shreds of torn, still cloud that stretched across the fathomless grey-blue of the sky.

From under her heavy lids she could see the crucifix on the wall, and as the hours of the long day slowly passed and the weariness lifted a little, her thought stirred and turned itself languidly toward the sculptured Agony.

What had it done, after all?

Beautiful as the life of self-immolation was, tragic as was its close, in what was the Man so supremely the Man of Sorrows? He was unknown till the age of thirty, living a life of tranquil thrift. Then for a brief three years he lived as innumerable mendicant friars

live, relying upon the hospitality that could always be found for holy men—a "homelessness" that causes no comment even at the present time.

He was a revolutionist, an iconoclast, and the exaltation of fanaticism swept him on from defiance to defiance, till it clashed with the Law, slow to permit change, and against its stone barrier the flame of his purpose blazed high, only to recoil upon itself and flare out into darkness.

If he was divine, his divinity was spiritual armour and the prescience of omniscience saw the Plan and saw the fulfilment of the Plan.

If he was human, his human sufferings were brief and for the most part impersonal. Human love and desire passed him by. He loved the world, not individuals. He was the inspired Reformer, bent upon conquering powers of evil. He could not be reached by fear nor price for the same reason that the Nihilist cannot be curbed nor bought. In both burned the fire of Martyrdom, more intoxicating than the essence of a whole world's wine-press.

Martyrdom does not suffer. In the body's pangs, the clamouring spirit finds its wings and soars. And the "temptation" was as absurd as it would be to offer paste jewels to India's Emperors. The world and the "glories" thereof, offered the Son of a God! This poor little sorrow-ridden sphere offered Infinity!

"And the tyranny and the sins and the brutalities in your name ever since, O Christus!"—June Ferriss looked at the drooping head and the closed eyes and the "Lips that we stopt with dust." "Do you see and know? We have been a Christian world for nineteen hundred years and how far have we climbed? Do you see the labour of little children? Do you see the magnificence and

luxury wrought out of their toil? Do you see the temples rearing dazzling arches to you, built with the sweated pennies wrested by fear from the hands of labouring women and weaklings? Do you know how the strong and the shrewd have made of your name a Thing of dishonour and theft, of inquisition and murder?"

The Nails? Why, they brought the exquisite lethargy of death! What was that brief agony compared to the long agony that bent to the blood-sweat of the treadmill, spurred on by the hunger cry of children, the frightened moan of dependent age! Despised and rejected of Men? Why held as unique in that? Was not all leadership marked by the wolves of suspicion and treachery and ingratitude? The Interpreter to a world of the wishes of Jehovah? And the thousand interpretations since of the Interpreter!

What a huge jumble of contradictions it all was! If out of the shifting pieces there had evolved the smallest indication of a Plan, toward which uncertainty might reach and find comfort, the obscurities could be accepted on faith. But the nineteen centuries had only stumbled from guesswork to guesswork, while controversy and dispute had offended logic and reason and had wearied those who cried for peace.

CHAPTER SEVENTEEN

EVENING brought a canopy of purple, powdered thickly with stars, and June, leaning on the wall that encircled the roof of the Residence, looked from its tender serenity down on the rivers of yellow lights that marked the City streets.

Beyond were the moving lights of ferry boats bearing their restless thousands away and bearing their other restless thousands back.

And beyond the river again, the flame of other city streets threw its yellow glow to the stars.

Back of June black-habited nuns paced softly, their robes flowing in the breeze that swept in from the ocean lying just beyond the yellow radiance, their rosaries clicking gently as they swayed from clasped fingers, while their lips soundlessly recited the offices. In the dusk and wonderful stillness of the roof that seemed so close to the "innumerable company of the stars," weary girls and women sat silently or spoke in hushed tones.

The evening brought its respite from work and from the problems that must be lifted with the coming day, and the great calm of night offered its benison to life and its "fitful fever."

"And what is it for—all this, Sister St. John?" said June as a tall nun with sombre eyes joined her at the wall. Sister St. John looked down at the world she had renounced.

"It is just the school, June. They want the world's noise and toys and play, but with it they have to learn through discipline. It is the only way."

"But it is a cruel way," objected June slowly. "Doesn't the Schoolmaster ever grow sick of the cruelty? Because so many of them never do learn, you know. They just battle awhile like wild animals, and then—go down."

"They have their choice." The tall nun's face was cold and stern where it gleamed palely from its white bands and long black veil. "They want the world and its vanities and cling to it as rebellious children cling to a dangerous plaything. They are free agents. They can give up and seek ways of peace, but they will not."

"Free?" June shook her head grimly. "Who of us is free? Why, before we are born men and women of our blood bind us with their passions and prejudices. In babyhood and childhood every thought is trimmed and pruned and coloured for us by those older and stronger than we are. School passes us on to the printed principles of people dead and forgotten. Our mind is there shaped into the groove made by other minds. Good and great, or bigoted and narrow—generous and kind, or mean and cruel—the plastic mind of the baby takes the imprint which the years hammer into permanence. Free? What chance has it to be free?"

"The soul is free," replied the nun sternly. "The mind is but the outer temple."

"The mind is the window of the outer temple, *ma sœur,*" June corrected. "Do you think that blindly struggling swarm of human maggots away over there could be made to see through its foul, grimed windows, hermetically sealed and barred by ignorance?"

"The ignorance is unlocked by the schools," reminded Sister St. John.

"The ignorance has but its rust scraped by the schools!" said June. "They learn arithmetic from the blackboard and iniquity from each other. They learn the barest smat-

tering of the three R's and they are then pitched out into that torrent down there, to swim in a handicap, before they have learned a stroke intelligent enough to carry them through a city puddle."

"You forget Holy Church, June—it watches over its children, always!"

"Holy Church only has its handful to-day, Sister St. John. It no longer reaches. It has lost its hold."

The two women, ascetic and rebel, strangely assorted yet strangely attracted and very good friends, looked out over the City in silence. Beneath the band of white linen the eyes of the *religieuse* smouldered with the fires of thwarted but unquenched womanhood.

June, with the keen insight of understanding, felt in her own soul the exquisite pain of that pale mask of peace moulded finely over unsleeping protest.

"My peace I give unto you!" June saw the still woman beside her face down on the floor of her cell, battling for that outer semblance that lay like chilled lava over molten passions that no church nor vow can change. Peace? The peace of the exhausted flagellant—of the hair-shirt penitent—of the spent body that climbs on bruised knees the Sancta Scala, the sacred stair of prayers —is that peace?

Peace?—that builds its sarcophagi over hearts quivering with the agony of hunger—on arms beating against the stone that keeps them empty—on lips thirsting with the Tantalus-thirst for other lips brought close in dreams that tortured and withheld—this was peace?

"Ma sœur—ma sœur—!" June's hand closed on the white hands clenched on the sacred beads.

"Ma sœur——!" It was just breathed on the stillness that hung above the monotone of the City, far below.

The nun turned her head slowly, the folds of the

black veil falling heavily back from the face, marble-white in the dim light of the stars. And the eyes of the women met.

Smouldering, aching, the burden of the world and the burden of the Church crossed their swords over the unending protest of womanhood. Turn where and how they would the iron yoke of pain waited, crushing down on tender, shrinking shoulders.

CHAPTER EIGHTEEN

ON the recommendation of a *confrère* of Dr. Moore's a large publishing house offered June a position on their editorial staff. They were working on a new edition of a medical dictionary and June's medical knowledge enabled her to fill the place.

In the editorial room about thirty silent people bent over desks and typewriters, slowly compiling the huge list of medical words and terms in use. Here June was installed.

A woman constantly moved from desk to desk, picking up carefully stacked piles of white paper, each sheet—of notepaper size—bearing a word with its accompanying data.

The piles she gathered she replaced with piles to be copied on typewriters, and this copying could only be done by those familiar with medicine, as errors were to be caught and the word returned to the chief for correction.

Thankful for the opening, June had hastily rented a tiny three-room shelter in an old-fashioned section of the City that had stranded midway between its wholesale and retail localities.

The section had a mixed population that included all classes from teamsters to artists. Multitudinous in types, tastes and habits, there was frank unanimity in the one great need—economy.

June's three rooms were in a building that held ten families. The janitress made up in good nature what she lacked in cleanliness, and agreed to see to Mr. Ferriss's few requirements for a small consideration. She—by

name Mrs. Miggs—lived in rooms of perpetual darkness, modified by two very economical gas jets, in the basement. It would have been the cellar in the country house, but people do not live in cellars, so the City sidesteps the objection by its designation of its subterranean homes as "the basement." And everybody is satisfied.

Mrs. Miggs probably started out her married life by being clean, but a chronic weariness on the part of Mr. Miggs left the major part of the bread-winning to his wife, so she accepted the situation with cheerful philosophy and regarded the world with lively interest from where she spent most of the time, which was sitting on the area steps.

The sidewalk and street gave her daily its passing show. Other "janitress ladies" in the block spent their days on their area steps within easy talking distance. Street pedlars and street pianos sang their wares and played their airs and the precocious children in much-soiled raiment danced with astonishing grace and abandon on the sidewalk.

Uptown where rents were high neighbours were unheard of. Nobody knew anybody but their own particular friends.

But that was not so where Mrs. Miggs and her sisterhood presided over the tenants entrusted to their care. True, the Avenue barred off interest in any but those in the block, but the block supplied all the entertainment one could keep track of.

New arrivals were scanned, their lares and penates appraised, their occupation communicated from area to area, and themselves scientifically "placed" within an hour after their arrival. As they arrived and departed frequently this was an unfailing and delightful excitement.

To the right of Mrs. Miggs' area was Tom Sing's Chinese laundry. The police visited Sing's occasionally to raid it for opium outfits or protect it from window-breaking small boys, as the case might be. And whether the case was raid or protection, Sing had to go down into the pockets of his Oriental trousers to treat the official itching palm, which he always did promptly but profanely.

Across the hall from the Ferriss flat—the rent was too cheap to be an apartment—was a free lance artist, behind them was an Irish teamster and under them a waiter of an uptown café.

They all greeted June cordially and democratically, and she adapted herself to the new environment with determined, if rather grim amusement.

A feature of the new régime to which she found the adapting a serious problem, however, was the question of income. As a member of the editorial staff of one of the largest publishing houses in the country, she received ten dollars per week. Like the teachers and professors of both the old and the new world, she found academic proficiency of small monetary value.

As a body of people her co-workers were quiet, refined, sad and shabby. They bowed to her and smiled when they met in the morning, and when they left. During the day no one spoke except when it was necessary, and then briefly and in a low tone.

And the day was endless.

Bending over the interminable piles of papers that grew and lessened, grew and lessened, with unbroken monotony, but that never ended and never would end, June began to wonder in affright if endurance, too, could be mechanically ordered and fixed.

The dull pain in her side began to bore deeper, and

as the appallingly long hours crawled by in slow and maddening minutes to the day's close that sometimes seemed to have forgotten to come, her face would flush, her arms twitch, and driven by intolerable nervousness she would leave her desk, go out to the hall and hurry to a window where she would lean out for long breaths of air.

This she found of common occurrence among her companions. No one heeded nor looked up when some one quietly rose and left the room. But June became familiar with the sallow, thin faces—with the dull mottled flush of tormented nerves, with the eyes, strained, glassy and weary, that looked unseeingly out over the City roofs.

The labour of the editorial room was the labour of Sisyphus. They rolled the stone up the hill hour by hour, but they never reached the top and they knew they never would. There was no cohesion nor coherence in the words that trailed jerkily across their desks. They were not related, and they built nothing and led nowhere.

But the source was as exhaustless as the task was exhausting, and as that inexorable, meaningless stream of words chained the hours into days and days into weeks, June began to suffer as those imprisoned beneath the constant drip of water used to suffer, till they went mad.

And under this rain of pebbles that beat across her brain with no respite, the anxiety of the week's expense gnawed always like a hidden rat. The furniture bought for the three rooms was costing two dollars a week. This left her eight. As yet she had not needed to buy clothes for herself nor for Mr. Ferriss. But even without that item, the eight would not reach, strain and strive as she would. Their table was pitifully light—Mr. Ferriss never ate much and June was too tired to be hungry. But bare necessities—food, rent, light, and fuel bought from Tony, the Italian, on the corner for ten cents a

basket—these devoured the eight dollars avidly, and each week saw a trinket sacrificed for a pawn-ticket to make up the deficit.

Was this the reward of labour? Not rest, nor security. Instead, toil that burdened to the breaking point, weariness too weary for sleep, and the noisome breath of the wolf at the door where slowly ebbing strength kept its desperate arm thrust through the hasps.

She dared not rest nor pause. The City had become a ravening horror—a monster that battened on weak girls and worn women. The auger in her side was agony, but the City was used to agony, it was such a common thing. And no one had time to care.

CHAPTER NINETEEN

ONE morning as she left her own little flat and went down the stairs she saw the wife of the café waiter standing at the front door. The waiter, named Martin, lived with his wife and baby in one room where Mrs. Martin cooked their meals on a one-burner gas plate which connected by a long tube to the gas-bracket on the wall.

The door of the room stood open and June could see the wire extension couch with its disordered bedding in the corner; the centre table with a granite pail for steeping tea and a few cheap dishes with some crusts of bread. On the wall hung a few limp-looking clothes and on the window a limp curtain of Nottingham lace, badly worn.

The room was hopelessly dreary and June looked from it to the thin figure with the baby in her arms, leaning against the doorway. She, too, looked hopelessly dreary, and June paused beside her with her hand on the shoulder that showed sharply under the cheap calico wrapper.

"Well, honey, how is my baby?"

She spoke cheerfully but her eyes narrowed as the woman turned a face thin and very white and looked at her dully. It had still a wan sort of prettiness, but scant food and bad air were blotting the prettiness out fast. And this morning June saw that her upper lip was bruised and had been bleeding.

"The baby? She's been bad again, Miss June." The mother looked down at the waxen little face with its

bluish shadows. The baby was asleep and seemed hardly to breathe.

"Business was poor at the café last night and Joe didn't make no more tips than enough to pay the head-waiter. The baby fretted all night and when Joe got home at two o'clock she cried harder. We were out o' milk, you know. Joe walked with her, but she just kep' on that wailin' an' at last he threw her at me on the bed an' grabbed his hat an' went out. Her head hit me on the mouth."

Mrs. Martin spoke with dreary indifference and her eyes were dry as she looked at the baby.

"She won't live long, I guess. An' I suppose it's a good thing. This ain't no kind of a world for babies. They don't have a chance."

June sped upstairs and hastily gathered up milk, rolls and two eggs. Hurrying down again, she gave them to the dull-eyed woman at the door and, already late, hastened to the publishing house.

The procession of disconnected words trailed over her desk, and hour after hour June copied them on the machine. Sternly, relentlessly, her mind had to focus on the particular transcribing, switching jerkily from one obscure word and derivation and definition to another. But back of the work lay the wax-like face of the baby with its starved blue lips. And back of the baby's face in phantom perspective she saw herself with bare shoulders and soft laces in the light of rose-shaded candles, with other smiling faces around her and obsequious black-clad waiters gliding here and there with silver-necked bottles wrapped in satin damask.

As life was a gamble, so then, was labour becoming a gamble. One did not earn one's bread by the sweat of the brow. The sweat of labour did not guarantee the

bread any more. The labour cannot always be found and June was now accustomed to the shabby groups of girls and women she passed mornings, clustered around narrow entrances to tall buildings where hung the familiar signs —"No more help wanted."

The labour cannot always be found and even when it could be found, the bread was uncertain. The waiter Martin, for instance, was short on tips because it had been a stormy night. So he had nothing left after he had paid the head-waiter for the privilege of serving patrons of the café.

The head-waiter was only paid a nominal sum because of the rake-off perquisites from his staff of underlings. And the smiling, anxious-eyed manager was not a slave driver. In fact he was a very decent and humane sort of individual. But in his safe was a thick ledger that carried a steadily lengthening row of figures that represented dinners and theatre suppers, and attached to them names very familiar in the newspaper columns devoted to the doings of the smart set of the City. And after a great many of these entries there was the word "unpaid."

So from the gorgeous satin-draped and palm-decked background that so enhanced the charm of richly gowned women and the dignity of well-groomed men June's sub-conscious mind ran down the gamut to the baby dying in the room under hers.

Joe Martin wasn't bad. He was not only a pretty good waiter but a pretty good father. But he was not crooked enough—or maybe clever enough—to "knock down" systematically as most of the waiters did when there was a chance to escape detection, and so he only had the tips that came to him legitimately to depend upon. And that meant that now and then food was scarce in the Martin home.

Mrs. Martin had helped some as a pantry maid till the baby came, but after that she had internal trouble that made her faint at inopportune times.

June was hearing a good deal about internal trouble and terror of that inopportune faint that meant betrayal to lynx-eyed foremen and foreladies and other awe-inspiring personages of authority. The auger that bored into her own body brought home to her with keen understanding woman's double burden of labour and pain. And recently she had begun to notice that she, too, had joined the ranks of the "cheerful liars." When the chief of the editorial room would look at the white streak that had supplanted the rose-brown Island tan on her cheek and enquire, "How are you, Miss Ferriss?"—Miss Ferriss was invariably "Splendid, thank you, Mr. Lane!"

With Mrs. Martin, however, the game was up, and failing the trained nurse and specialist and year abroad that her case would have required had her husband sat, instead of served, in the golden background described, she could only drag weakly around the shabby room and try to "take a nap," with Bedlam spilling in on her from the shabby street and the fumes of mingled steam and opium floating to her from Tom Sing's. The fumes and the Bedlam made her very dizzy and very sick at her stomach, as they did June, but she was tenement born and so started with a resigned philosophy that did not question, where June battled desperately to wrest philosophy from books and found it cold.

Medicine, with all its stately array of Latin mysteries, trailed steadily across June's desk as the long day waxed and waned, but what good was the whole great school of medicine to Joe Martin's baby? The big publishing house and the big dictionaries balanced their majesty with that of the big universities of medicine and the men

with big names who delivered profound lectures therein.

But the soft little face with the tender lips grown blue and no longer "wailin'" filled June's horizon just then. The ponderous tomes and the ponderous gentlemen were too late. Of what use expensive knowledge when the baby is dead? The screw that was loose was farther back in the scheme of things. If babies die wailin' for a little milk, and girls and women develop nerves and internal troubles through labour too long and too arduous, why not hunt the loose screw that feeds hospital and morgue, instead of building new 'Varsities and landscape gardening the campus?

At the back of the editorial room was a long table at which the "Alphebetizers" sat. These were young girls who sat on hardwood chairs in the silent room all day long, and sorted papers into their proper order according to the alphabet.

Young faces, but strained with the unbroken suppression of the stillness and the inaction of young and restless limbs. Their heads constantly lifted from the monotonous task and June noted in each face the startled, instinctively protesting eyes that swept across the room with its many desks and stooping figures—eyes that grew rebellious, then piteously baffled and then dull, as they read submission in the silence and the bowed heads, and turned draggingly back to their work.

The baby and the young girls, and the sad and shabby editorial staff and the waiter—they did not fit somehow with the superb framed lithograph of a Romanesque group of edifices dedicated to "research" that hung over the chief's desk. They were close and very real and their need seemed urgent, while the lofty corridors of learning with their costly scientific equipment—admirable, of course!—seemed cold and distant.

When June reached home that night the baby was dead. Joe had gone to work—the gentlefolk who sat had to be served whether babies died or not and Joe had a small matter to settle with the undertaker around on the Avenue.

Mrs. Martin was not crying. She lay on the bed with her arm over the baby and stared at the large pattern of the paper on the wall.

June lifted the very light form that seemed hardly more than a waxen doll from beside the mother and held the little face against her throat. It was the second dead baby she had held there within a short time. But the other had not groped with famished little hands and lips against breasts that had dried through what the profound dignitaries call mal-nutrition. This one had been a good many hours dying, while the other drifted comfortably from sleep to sleep.

Which was murder? And who was responsible for the death of Joe's baby? Joe, gaunt from poor living and long hours and worry, had gone mad for the moment with the "wailin' "; and as he deftly waited on the patrons this night he could hear that feeble cry of suffering under the joyous swing of the Tango music that made merry for the fortunate. Joe wasn't bad and in the extra glassware corner his head went down in his crooked arm and slow tears soaked into the waiter's rented dress coat.

A very depressed gas-burner betrayed the uncompromising darkness of the hall as June climbed wearily up the stairs. She was desperately tired, the pain in her side was worse, the trinkets she pawned to make up deficits were growing few and her nights were now thronged with figures that danced crazily in the dark when she lay awake because she was too tired to sleep.

At the top of the stairs she sat down and leaned her head against the old walnut banister. The dim hall was heavy with the odours from Tom Sing's and from the unappetizing suppers being cooked in the house. In the teamster's flat, the teamster's daughter was playing a ragtime with her right hand, while she struck loud chords very much at random with her left.

Discordant noises clashed in from the street and joined Mame's music, and the street dust made the air of the house hazy and acrid in the throat. June, her nerves now naked to the acute wretchedness of it all, felt a sudden, shocking ripple of mirth shake her from head to foot. Why, it was hell—just plain, sordid, protracted hell! And yet, hideous as it all was, she couldn't keep it going. Next week she wouldn't have anything to pawn!

What did people do next?

"For we're bankrupt, you know, June girl," she told herself, rubbing the unholy laugh from her lips with a hand that shook. "We're cold, stony broke, as Ted and the boys would say."

The boys? Her mind flashed back to that strange world of happy-go-lucky enjoyment she had once been a part of. It was another hemisphere—another planet. What did those prosperous, proper, ancestor-dominated people know of Life, unshrouded and abominable, as she knew it! Life? Why, they were born and lived and died with eyes unopened. From the cradle they moved forward with mechanical accuracy to the neat tombstone waiting with the neat tombstones of their forbears.

Of Life they knew as much as infants and "innocents," as calmly happy as they in their ignorance.

June felt the cold sweet sweep of the wind coming across miles of heaving waters against her burning face and lips. Through her hot eyelids where acid tears stung

she could see a night sky's purple depths—what Robert Louis, the beloved, called "a wonderful calm night of stars." It was vast and serene and clean, that velvet, starred darkness that folded depth on depth of fragrant shadow over sleeping shore and murmurous waters.

She had loved it all with a passion that had but deepened with the months and years. Its voices called to her, and its silent, long hours were eloquent with the mysteries they poured into her soul, that lifted it on wide, exultant wings to dizzy places where laughed her pagan gods.

"Oh, you!—you! Where are you? I have lost you!——"

She reached out her arms suddenly, then clutched the walnut rail and pulled herself up to her knees. Holding the wood, she dropped her lips against her wrist and pressed them there hard. Unholy laughter nor acrid tears—for these there was no time. The girl of the Island had lived and died. The woman of the City had now her problem. And as Mame Tully's ragtime crashed out with reckless and defiant discordance, June closed the door of her little flat briskly behind her and tossed her tweed hat skilfully, if at a rakish angle, onto her father's handsome grey head.

"You certainly are the beautifulest thing, Dad Ferriss!" she informed him as she kissed him on the nose. "I am in constant terror of those 'widow ladies' of our block, who have their eyes on you and try to be effusively polite to me. I take it with salt, James!"

She scowled at him knowingly and switched the simmering kettle to the front of the little stove, where it began to sing.

Mr. Ferriss roused out of his abstraction and looked up at her with a dreamy smile. Then his eyes cleared

and they studied her with some of their old, piercing brilliancy.

"You're tired—and you look thin, June. What is this fad of yours? You are going into it too hard, girl!"

"Fiddlesticks!"

His daughter breezily spread some dishes on a small table and added some eatables she had brought home with her.

"You belong to the *ancienne regime,* dear man," she told him with lofty pity. "You picture women in frilly skirts eight yards wide, sitting down tatting. But them days has went, Jimmy Ferriss. We are busy ladies these times, and we are going to make you po' ornery male creatures sit up and take notice. Watch us!"

She patted his shoulder as she reached over and filled his cup and her own out of a small "Brown Betty" tea pot, which she returned to the stove.

"Everything has its compensations, if you mine deep enough and hard enough for them," she murmured piously. "Dining in a ten by twelve kitchen *sans ceremonie,* one doesn't need a tea-cosy. And one's next course keeps hot on the stove till one reaches for it, without having to get up. Yes?—hoo-hoo!—I'm home, Dicky!" she added, raising her voice as a muffled triple thump sounded on the wall.

"Forgotten something, as usual, I suppose—another poor helpless male," she went on in large commiseration. "Butter this time, Richard?"

The door opened and a shock of hair surmounting a wild pair of blue eyes appeared around the edge.

"Praise be! You're home. It's sugar, and I can't drink my tea without sugar and I can't go out—there's fifty divils drivin' me with work this night!"

"Of course you can't—and of course they are—and I

was late. But why didn't you ask Flossie? She would have lent you sugar and made your tea for you."

June twinkled maliciously at her father as Mr. Regan, the newspaper artist, groaned and clutched his hair.

"I don't want them to make tea for me—and I don't want annything to do with them!" exclaimed the artist in a rich brogue, anguish on his furrowed brow. "I have not time to be bothered with women—they have no sense. You have, but the rest drive ye mad with their chatter—chatter."

June laughed as she scooped some sugar into the tea-cup. Flossie was a cloak model who did light housekeeping in one room on the floor above and she had lingered frequently on the front steps to express her sympathy for the scowling but good-looking sketchist.

"There's your sugar, you mad Irishman. What's new?"

"New? It's old—the old story. They're brootes—brootes!—the editors in this country. In London they acted like gentlemen. If they couldn't use your stuff they explained like civilised bein's. But here——!" Mr. Regan raised clenched fists to Heaven. "They hold it a week, then all you see is an impident boy who says 'the boss says nothin' doin'.'"

Mr. Regan rolled sepulchral "brootes!" out of his surcharged system with a volcanic wrath that was, to June Ferriss, a joy.

"And you can't punch his nose!" she sighed regretfully. "Poor Dicky. It's a tough world."

"Well, 'Life' bought the champagne glass evolution joke——" This was what the Broadway girl was turned into, according to Regan's pictures. "And a catalog house gave me an order, and the *War Cry* wants some

more Hell cartoons. So it's busy I'll be, praise God! Though it isn't rich I'm gettin'."

June's intuitive sixth sense detected a something still wanted, and she looked up from the second supply of tea she was pouring.

"Can't I help out, Dicky? Any figure work to-night?"

Regan stretched out an imploring arm, finished off with a teacup of sugar.

"Oh, it's meself that's the broote, Miss June! But that line and wash I started yesterday won't come right. If ye're not too tired—just ten minutes, maybe!——"

The brogue choked as June nodded obligingly.

"Why, of course, stupid! Tailored or draped?"

"Draperies—it's the hang of the folds that bothers me. And I'll pray to the saints for ye!" cried the grateful artist, diving gladly across the hall to get his supper, which he ate with one speculative eye on his easel.

A little later, June Ferriss, a kimono of soft white woollen fabric twisted around her, went over and placed herself in a chair in the pose required.

Regan, all grateful enthusiasm, worked like mad, pausing occasionally to roll himself the artist's and journalist's favourite "short smoke," which he puffed with nervous fierceness while he studied the lines of his model's robe as she leaned easily back against the cushion he had braced her tired back with.

The line and wash was one of his "good things" that were as the breath of his nostrils, that he held to with dogged pertinacity through the seven-day grind of the week for bread. Slow sellers, these "good things." The jokes and the crude cartoons and the commercial work paid, if but little. But they were the "still-born" of his talent—the things ground out against the beat of strain-

ing pulses—the things that had nothing of the thrill of creating and nothing of the glory of achievement.

"Did you find the 'Hunger' you were going to show me?" June asked during one of the pauses, while Regan wrestled with a refractory hair in one of his fine brushes.

"I did——" He swooped down on a case that stood on the floor packed with sketches, and selected a card that he handed to her.

It was a wash-drawing of a tramp. There was a suggestion of Winter and of barren fields behind him—the figure faced you with its hat pulled low over the eyes, hands thrust into the pockets of a shabby coat, knees slightly bent. That was all. But the face that looked straight at yours—the gaunt features, the haggard eyes, the bare, brutal tragedy of failure that knows the profound depths to which failure can sink—these caught at you.

Regan swept in his last satisfying strokes triumphantly and reached for the tobacco.

"I am yours forever, Mary Ellen Ryan," he announced happily. "Faith an' I'll sleep like an angel this night, thanks to you, Miss June. That picture is out of my system, so I can turn to an' saw cordwood awhile, without the police bein' called because of me shmashin' the furniture. Glory be!"

At midnight June, wide-eyed, lay on the narrow couch-bed in the little living room. A stand beside the couch held a shaded student-lamp, some books and a squat brass bowl with some heather in it. On the walls were a few good engravings and etchings, and some low, open shelves held books and periodicals. Several worn but massive leather easy chairs and some dull-toned rugs about completed the few relics of that other life that Ferriss and his daughter had once known. But the room

was restful in itself, in the semi-quiet of the night's meridian, and June's eyes, when night and sleeplessness began to become familiar things, wandered over the old, memory-steeped articles with an ache of longing that deepened their shadows of pain.

To-night with the "Hunger" propped against the wall beside her, she lay in the utterly motionless posture of complete exhaustion. Under the white woollen folds her breast hardly stirred in its tired breathing.

But the eyes, where pain's artist-thumb had smudged its dark shadow, were very much alive, and in their darkness was a lambent flame that the eyes of the tramp had wakened.

She was fighting with every inch of her strung taut as a bow-string, and she knew that she was losing. The auger that bored into her side began to take shape as a malign power that pressed home its torture with careful gauging of her strength. It did not kill—it would not kill—but it turned, day and night, night and day, till the brutal persistence of it filled her soul with recurring storms of rebellion in which sight went red.

It was the camel crossing the desert with the burden and the sore on its hump, of James Lane Allen's book. He could understand the burden, but he couldn't understand the sore.

And June, with narrowing walls of circumstances steadily closing around her, with exhaustion and pain dragging her down like weighted corpses on a spent swimmer, lay in the dim-lit room staring into the eyes of the failure, while his protest, ugly and bitter, spoke to her protest that understood.

Her eyes held by the steady, bitter eyes of the picture, June reached for pad and pencil and wrote what they said to her:

THE DERELICT

What is the use of fighting?
I'm down and out and done;
My bent knee cramp is the prison stamp,
For I am a convict's son.

Sired by a crook and dam'd
By a She-thing out for hire,
Our birth-right sold for wanton gold,
Our heritage the mire——

We are born with ears outstanding,
We are nursed at the breasts of Sin,
And by Good forgot, we warp and rot
Before our lives begin.

Bad was the seed that bred us,
Bad was the womb that bore,
And bad is the flaw in the bitter law
That damns us evermore.

Oaths were my father's greeting,
Oaths were my lullaby,
And the spawn of shame play a losing game
'Gainst Nature's conspiracy!

CHAPTER TWENTY

BUT I didn't write it—it was all in the picture, Dicky," she said to Regan the next evening. "I used to have pictures tell me things when I was in college."

Regan was re-reading the verses in silence while Mr. Ferriss, roused to interest by the voices, reached for a portfolio among the books on the shelves.

"This is full of the fruit of the 'green and salad days,' Regan," he said, drawing out a lot of loose college magazine leaves and stray sheets of paper with fine scratchy sketches, and handing them to the artist. "Some of them are not bad. But she dropped all that interesting nonsense when she came home."

Regan, still in silence, took the papers with their nonsense verses and distinctly clever little drawings and pulled his long nose cruelly as he scowled more and more deeply over the jingles. At last he sighed and looked up at June, who was basting the clean linen bands in her business waist for the morning.

"Drudgin'—drudgin' like a slavey—an' nobody knew she cud do it—an' they were here ahl the toime."

Mr. Regan's brogue became bog-like as his excitement increased. "Wumman!—wumman!—ye won't set the Thames on foire, an' who wants ta! But by the blissid saints in glory, ye can get out of that slave factory."

June broke her thread and patted the white linen into place, then closed her work basket and leaned forward.

"You mean——?" she said, her voice carefully steady,

and Regan's red hair bristled into an aurora as he shoved his fingers through it rapturously.

"I mean that wan of those verselet things, wid the sketch, will pay you as much as those holy pirates pay you in a week. Go to it! To the bottom wid those dictionary daylight robbers! Oi'll take the best of these down to some of those editor barbarians to-morrow."

It was in this wise that June Ferriss was gathered into the Brotherhood. Her untrained but daring pencil had a breezy trick of its own that stamped it as individual. Her nonsense verses were often the veriest nonsense, but they somehow found a smile or a sigh lurking unawares in a trifling incident or sentiment, and being her own sketchist, sketch and squib were more truly akin than where they are products of separate brains, however sympathetic.

"The barbarians" received her with suspicion and adopted her with approbation. It was "pretty good dope—handy fillers for page make-up—useful syndicate stuff." And June felt her way carefully, and yet with an odd sense of familiarity, along the busy, brusquely healthy path of artist life.

No editor would print *The Derelict,* so it went into the portfolio of forgotten things. But June and Regan were too busy and too interested and too philosophical to care.

They cheerfully ground out "pot-boilers," wrangled over ideas and their treatment, and tramped the City's byways regardless of the Curfew of conventionality.

Conventions were of shallow root and of an uncultured variety in their world. It was a world that gave little credit to hot-house virtues—a world whose women were storm-swept pines, whipped and beaten by winds that either broke or strengthened. It was, in bitter

earnest, the survival of the fittest. It weeded out little meannesses, and it twisted into the fibre of its women the sterner and stronger qualities that are borne of battle and resistance and conquest.

CHAPTER TWENTY-ONE

A YEAR later, Regan's muffled triple thump sounded on the wall of one of June Ferriss's rooms, and June "Hoo-hoo'd" in reply. But it was a different wall this time.

With the easy "army-fashion" way of changing quarters on marching orders that Bohemia has, the Ferriss and Regan household gods had flitted several streets farther North and had fitted themselves quickly and deftly into newer and more attractive niches.

June had moved into a cheerful little four-room apartment fitted out as conveniently and compactly as a yacht. Regan growled ferociously at having his work broken into, but refused to be left behind. So he packed up to a running accompaniment of irate protest and unpacked with dire threats if "it happened again," to which Miss Ferriss, busy and happy, sweetly enquired: "Did you speak, Dicky?"

Regan had a two-room and bath "batch" apartment, was working like a steam engine and growing used to America. He had now as little patience with the wasting of seconds over non-essentials as the impolite editor gentlemen of whom he had once disapproved. He was still loyal to London and the sacred memory of Phil May, but with quick Irish adaptability had taken root firmly in the new, vibrant soil that bristled with all sorts of growths that meant opportunity.

Meanwhile, June, ever scouting for new ideas, found the team-work not only profitable but convenient in many ways. Regan's character work was his strongest,

and together they hunted for "types" of City night life, which is a City in itself, and in the hunting June's material for stories and sketches piled up rapidly in the storehouse of her mind.

On the night of the signal that opens our chapter, Regan came in to say he wanted some characters in a Chinese play that was then running for an article on Oriental drama. It was a rush assignment, and not an easy one, as a Chinese superstition regarding something in the way of "witch-magic" or some such prejudice hard to analyse in the labyrinthine Oriental mind, made sketching in Chinatown not only difficult, but dangerous.

In securing his thumb-nail sketches, June was of invaluable assistance. So, as her little desk-clock chimed the half-hour after ten, June buttoned herself into a close-fitting dark coat, pulled a soft cloth walking hat down over her brows and announced herself ready.

It was a comparatively short run across town to the Chinese section, and they were soon threading their way among the soft-footed, slant-eyed residents. Shops dimly lighted but crowded with either Chinese silks, carvings and china, or with strange-looking Chinese edibles, were elbowed tightly together. In doorways, iron tripods supported charcoal braziers over which odd-smelling foods were cooking. In the doorways and on stools along the sidewalk the merchants lounged, smoked and chattered in their sing-song dialect. The temples with their huge crimson and gilt gods glimmered from second-story windows—glimmered dustily, for the great carven figures that sit and stare in ironic gravity out over the heads of awed "personally conducted" tourists knew, as June and Regan knew, that they were for the most part but "tourist" gods. For the grave-faced Celestial has

a sense of humour and will give imitation religion to the curious generously, content that the tourist coin flow in remunerative stream into shop and chop-suey house coffers.

Regan and his companion made their way into the theatre and down an aisle through the heavy fumes of opium. Skirting the audience, they chose seats at the extreme right, with Regan next to the wall. Thus seated, he held his thumb-nail pad under June's elbow and "took notes"—microscopic strokes that would bloom next day into drawings of wonderfully accurate detail.

The stage was raised about two feet from the floor, and the actors, according to Chinese custom, were all men. Those who took the women's parts were rouged a violent red, and all pitched their voices in a nerve-racking falsetto and walked with a mincing, affected step which they dropped for their natural slow tread while in full view of the audience when they reached the exit.

The costumes for this particular play, which was weeks long, picking up each night the thread of the drama where it was dropped the night before, were particularly gorgeous and complicated in their symbolism, and Regan was quickly busy while battle, murder and sudden death held the attention of the absorbed onlookers.

June, sensitive to conditions, was soon aware, however, that the Oriental beside her was growing suspicious. With subtle carefulness, he would lean far back in his seat. June, apparently absorbed in the action of the play, would mechanically lean back also. Very soon the dark-clad form at her left would stir uneasily and then carelessly lean forward. June, her gaze intently fixed on a hideously rouged actor, would lean forward also, her lips parted and every evidence of enthralled admiration in face and pose.

The crafty, Oriental eyes would turn in their narrow slits and she would feel the alien and sinister watchfulness searching her features as though it was a scalpel of fine, cold steel.

Regan, making every second count, kept the pad under her elbow, his busy pencil not pausing as his hands, with wrists touching, moved forward or back as she moved. They were the only foreigners in the big, dim, smoke-reeking hall. And they were of necessity close to the stage and a long way from the door. There was some danger, but they were used to danger, and took it with easy philosophy as part of the game.

As further changing of position, in seeming unconsciousness, was nearing the precarious point, the welcome signal of the little pad against her arm told June the cast had been secured. Neither she nor Regan changed their attitude, however, and the Chinaman at June's left, after some moments of searching scrutiny, finally settled back, baffled.

After another five minutes of the falsetto dialogue with the chorus roll of drums that followed every heroic sentence in rather bewildering fashion, the two white spectators quietly slipped along the wall aisle and out to the street.

"Johnny Chink was 'on,' all right," chuckled Regan as he took June's arm and they walked down the street. "But you kept him guessin', alanna. Sure an' it's the Sara Bernhardt ye wud make! I was watchin' ye out of top o' my head, an' faith I began to think ye were mashed on the matinée gink with the pink pagoda on his head, and the green petticoat. And now for some tay —may God bliss the man that invinted that same!"

Chop-suey and little bowls of fragrant tea rounded off the night's work comfortably. It was too late for tour-

ists, but several Chinamen were gathered around one of the tables visiting, one with a solemn-eyed two-year-old sitting on the table in front of him. Regan got the baby on his inch pad and sighed blissfully.

"That means nixt month's rent, glory be to God!" said he piously, stuffing the little pad in his pocket. "I can shteal a little time for that oil—the twilight thing, you know—this week, I think."

"Ghosts?"

Regan nodded.

"The 'Jiu-jitsu' series will keep the commissariat from goin' empty, and those vaudeville display cards will pay the laundry, so it's a millionaire I am till the first, anyhow. Jawn D. himself can't do more than ate an' schlape and look around a bit, can he?"

"And he hasn't the excitement of 'playing the game'!" June leaned forward on her elbows, balancing the tiny china tea-bowl on the palm of her hand. "It's all a game, Dicky. We roll the dice and Fate keeps the count, deuce and four, six and trey. When she plays fair we can keep even. But she doesn't always play fair. Sometimes she loads the dice——"

"And thin we go broke!"

Regan sighed tragically.

"Sure, the first av the month is always a gamble, an' that's the truth," he agreed. "To ate, or not to ate? To shtand off the agent wid his rent, or to move? To lick the shpalpeen that ordhered commercial drawings and lied fifty per cent off the price agreed, or turn the other cheek for the sake of bein' a Christian an' because ye need the money. My Gawd, if I could get some of the nose-smashin' out of moy system that I am kapin' warrum for some o' thim crooks that owe me money this minnut——!"

Together they prowled wherever Life could be found shorn of its disguise, and in the prowlings they found it fiercely real. Pauper-ward of hospital, jail, morgue, opium-joint, the City's "bad-lands" where crime lives and breeds while the law in all its majesty looks on and knows and is helpless—into these they blended, both quick to take on the vague, intangible air of their surroundings and so able to get local colour for the publications that sent their sudden, imperative calls for "stuff."

And June's circle of friends widened steadily, if rather startlingly as to type. In fact, respectability did not interest her at all. Her chiefs never sent her out on the regular "grind," that harvests the steady diet the press serves with the morning coffee. She would have made more money if they had, but she would have broken down in a month.

Her odd, scratchy little sketches were impressionistic in the literal sense. They were little, erratic vignettes born of a face, an incident, the glimpse of a scene caught, as it were, through the swinging door that closed again shutting the story itself inside. To these she added little scratchy stories, vagrant fancies, broken mosaics.

And her familiars dropped in at all hours for shop-talk and a sandwich. Mr. Ferriss would rouse from the tranquil lethargy that held him for the most part and enjoy the brisk matching of wits when three or four tired toilers of Bohemia "fell in" and took possession of the "flatlet."

"You see, you and the flatlet are really handy things to have round," Miss Ferriss was graciously informed one evening when she reached home and found six embryo stars of several professions very busy in her kitchen.

Mr. Ferriss had been tied into a gingham apron and set to peeling oranges. The six stars, variously made and in the making, were getting dinner. Clara Sherbourn, stately Southern woman with a classic head and figure, was washing lettuce. Her husband, a playwright and star, and for whom she was leading woman, was anxiously watching a large steak which was broiling in the gas range. The playwright was six feet three in height, of splendid physique, and strikingly handsome. Wayne Huntoon seemed an especial favourite of the deities that rule destinies. Possessed of talent, good looks and a winning good nature, he took these possessions in an easy, matter-of-course fashion that endeared him to the members of his companies and to the friends who claimed him the country over.

Standing beside him was the novelist, Orin Tweed, one inch taller than Huntoon, also broad-shouldered, with a leonine head of iron-grey hair, a profile like those found on bronze Roman coins, stormily bristling eyebrows and eyes as gentle and tender as one of the maiden characters in his books.

A slim girl, "Mocky" Hazleton, was perched on the table making salad dressing, and a little, oldish man, partially bald and with a Cyrano de Bergerac nose, was sitting on the table beside her, grinding coffee in a mill held on his lap. Miss Hazleton played ingenue rôles in Huntoon's company, and the oldish man was a newspaper free-lance who wrote exquisite lyrics and wistful, fragmentary bits of verse that were as delicate as cobwebs, dew-gemmed where the dawn light touched them into fairy loveliness. He was affectionately called "the major"—Major Henry Dascom—and the major was a chivalrous and gallant admirer of the gentler sex, as shown by his verse, and had suffered many and vari-

ous disillusions in the name of romance, that had caused him to plunge his sorrow into the fountain of forgetfulness recommended by Omar, the Persian—this, as was shown by his nose.

Dicky was slicing bread on the draining board of the little white porcelain sink, where Miss Sherbourn was "spatting" the lettuce leaves free of water.

"Hello, you crowd!—welcome to our city! Heavens, that steak do smell lickin' good, chile! If you let it burn, Wayne, Clara will wear weeds—hyah me talkin', man!" cried the belated hostess.

To the imminent danger of the steak, the chef turned upon the lady who threatened his life and gathered her into a large and bear-like hug.

"Her was the faggonedinist faggondene doggone 'at ever was——" intoned Mr. Huntoon in sacred rapture. "Her was the everlastinest and mos' beautifulis' faggon——"

A determined elbow well jammed into the third button of Mr. Huntoon's apron-draped vest ended the tribute in a pained gasp, and Miss Ferriss twisted out of the smothering embrace and grabbed wrathfully at her falling hairpins.

"You great big mountain!" she exclaimed in indignation rather marred in effect by a mouthful of tortoise-shell. "The steak! The steak!" she added in anguish.

"The steak!——" took up a Greek chorus, but the resourceful novelist had skilfully grabbed a wooden salad spoon and a japanned thermometer off the wall, and with these swung the smoking sirloin aloft to safety.

"Dad Ferriss has the oranges—slice them, like a duck, for the salad, June child, and we're ready," called Miss Sherbourn over the confusion of greeting. "If you people *will* stop your noise for a minute and carry

these things in to the table! Major, that coffee-aroma is Araby the blest. Bring along your little music-box. Put in oodles of oil, Mocky child. I'm too fat now, and Wayne swears he'll discharge me if I don't train down. But if he does, I'll get a divorce and you'll marry me, won't you, Major?"

"Marry you!" The major's voice was tremulous with emotion, and grabbing the olive oil, he poured a golden stream recklessly over the green leaves.

"Traitor!" thundered the star, wrenching the bottle away. Then he held it aloft and gazed at it bitterly.

"And I loved her!—I loved her, although she was m' wife. And he, m' trusted friend, betrayed me! This bottle—this!—For the woman who slept in m' bosom, he emptied this bottle, and it cost me eighty cents!"

The laughing crowd were gathering up articles to be carried to the next room, yet lingered in obedience to the rare witchery of the golden voice weighted with its mock pathos.

Tweed pointed to him with the gravied thermometer and exclaimed despairingly: "That's the way he pulls out the tremolo stop when he wants to borrow money, and I always lend it to him. I swear I won't, and when I know he's short I don't take any money with me. And then he gets his voice going like that, and it wouldn't matter if he just recited the Illinois Central time-table—I would go right down and pawn my watch and give him the ten."

At the table, Huntoon swung the long apron over his left shoulder, toga fashion, and proceeded to carve the meat. Through the babel of voices his wife called to him from the other end of the table:

"That reminds me of the farmer in Fairville—tell June, Wayne."

Huntoon grinned reminiscently.

"We were doing one-night stands and playing water-tanks and that sort of thing. I was star and stage-carpenter, and Clara was doubling as wardrobe woman and treasurer, when we had anything to treasure. In fact, we were not under a benign star, but we needed the money, so we played everything and anywhere. We struck Fairville at fair time—jumped from the other town after the performance and arrived in the sma' hours to find the one hotel full. We were directed to Si Mullin's place, as Si took boarders when he could get them, and we pounded on the front door. Si stuck his head out of the window and called down: 'Who be ye?' We were shivering in the snow, but I answered as winningly as the night I accepted Clara when she proposed: 'This is the world-famous Huntoon Company of players, and we have come to board with you during our engagement in the city.' Si peered down at us suspiciously and then enquired: 'Well, be you any o' them togy fellers?' 'Any what?' I asked. 'Togy fellers—them that wears togys in their play-actin'. I ain't goin' to take in no more o' them kind, 'cause the last ones stole my sheets to wear fer togys.' "

"And that was one time Wayne's winning voice Waterloo'd. It didn't go with Si, and I had to assure him we were playing *The Two Orphans* and *East Lynne,*" added his wife.

Mocky was clamouring to make the coffee in the percolator and the major was afraid she would burn her fingers. He allowed her to turn the little tap while he poured the coffee back into the bubbling bowl, and she left the little tap turned on when she suddenly happened to think of a story she wanted to tell.

"Wurra, wurra!" mourned Regan as he quickly hauled

her curly head down on his breast and reached over it to grab the tap. "Not that I love you less, but I love coffee more, mavourneen," he added as he released the head and drew the urn-tray in front of his own place. "The major loves not wisely but too well, an' if it's all the same to you, I will carve the coffee meself."

"Oh, do be quiet, you'all, and let *me* talk!" Mocky wailed, in her plaintive, child-like voice that always brought tears so easily to the eyes of an audience. "I want to tell what Wayne and Orin did last night. You know, they were to orate at the Union League and there was a new door-man who didn't know them——" ("Fame! What is fame!—when a door-man knows you not!" Huntoon murmured bitterly. "June, take your elbow out of the olives and let me have one and a half, *nicht wahr?*")

"June, *choke* him with olives!" Miss Hazleton exclaimed indignantly. "I *will* tell my story! They hadn't any ticket with them, and when the man said they would have to show their tickets they just turned and went out again. And there were some of those horribly rich magnate men to be at the banquet, too, who expected to hear them. Well, they didn't send in for anybody—they just went down to the corner and wept and said they were out in the cold world and nobody cared for them, and what would they do?—"

"Well, I'll leave it to the distinguished company here present if that was not the case," Mr. Tweed objected, waving a dill pickle comprehensively to the table.

"And then, what do you think?" continued Miss Hazleton. "They turned up their coat collars, pulled their soft felt hats down over their noses, hunched their shoulders and asked each man they met for the price

of a night's lodging. They took turns, and the men lectured them awfully for being so lazy, and they ought to be ashamed of themselves, such big, strong men as they were, to beg on the street, and why didn't they get work to do? And they would stammer and explain how they were sick—sick!—look at them! and the men would nearly burst, they would get so mad, and they would stride away to write the papers, I suppose, about the growing hobo evil. And these two would weep on each other's shoulders and wait for the next man. And the Union League was having cat-fits phoning every hotel and club in town for their star speakers!"

"We were refused admittance, and we wouldn't be rude to a respectable door-man," insisted Tweed firmly. "We are gentlemen, perfect gentlemen."

"Besides, we were studying character—putting ourselves in the place of the homeless and moneyless, to portray them in our art with the rare fidelity for which we are famous," added Mr. Huntoon modestly.

"Studying poppycock!" sniffed Miss Hazleton irreverently. "They put in about two hours of this sort of thing, having the time of their lives, while the Union League was losing its church standing and melting the wires. And then they struck a gambler and he listened to their story, and he hauled out a quarter and said: 'The two-bit is my last and only, boys, but I'll whack up. It's good for schooners.' And they each took an arm of the gambler and showed him everything worth while. He eat and drank till he must be dead by now."

"A slight token of our gratitude," explained Mr. Tweed. "The world seemed full of good advice and estimable people, but we sighed for the oasis and the tinkling spring. For the friend who would question not, nor improve the shining occasion, but would give com-

fort to our hearts and refreshment to our spirits——"

"And spirits for our refreshment," cheerfully added Huntoon. "The gambler was not respectable, but he looked with large tolerance upon human weakness, and he gave us the benefit of the doubt. We really were thirsty by that time, and we were also sick. The respectable gentlemen had made us sick. They all 'harped upon the mouldered string' of our size and our joblessness. We might have been telling the truth, but it was cheaper to believe that we lied. The gambler, not being respectable, knew the queer freaks of Fate and knew that life sometimes has downs that are unavoidable, as well as ups that are not aways to our credit. Success does not always bear analysis. It is a golden apple that is frequently spotted and not infrequently rotten at the core."

"What saith the Union Leaguers to-day?" Regan enquired with a grin.

Tweed stirred his coffee abstractedly, and Huntoon looked pained.

"Mr. Tweed and I have been busy, very busy, to-day, and have been absent from our usual haunts," the latter explained patiently. "We—er—preferred to be quiet this evening also, so we invested in steak and things and phoned Clara to meet us at the flatlet. We felt we would like to converse with Dad Ferriss till June got home."

Mr. Ferriss looked quietly amused.

"But they had Mocky phone the Press Club," he said gently. "And they learned there were a number of gentlemen waiting there to converse with them."

"Yes, we have friends—we are popular," Tweed admitted. "But sometimes one yearns for the simple life—to get away from compliments and adulation."

"And hard-muscled Leaguers yearning for exercise," added Mr. Ferriss.

It was midnight when the merry brigade departed, and June sat down for an hour's work at her desk. In bed, she read for another half hour, then turned out the shaded reading light and drifted comfortably to sleep.

At three o'clock she was awakened by the phone, and switching on the light she hurried to her desk.

"Yes? Who is it?" she called anxiously.

"That you, June?" a voice asked.

"Yes—what *is* the matter?" she cried.

"This is the Press Club—Huntoon," answered the voice. "Orin and I came for our mail, and we remembered that we had forgotten to ask how you were."

"For the love of all the saints——!" Miss Ferriss choked. "Wayne Huntoon, do you mean to tell me you waked me out of a sound sleep just to ask——! Oh, I hope you two will die of indigestion! I hope that sirloin will give you both appendicitis! I hope——"

"There, honey lamb chile! Go back to its ikkle beddy-bye then, so it shall. Rock-a-bye, baby, in the tree top——"

Miss Ferriss's receiver went home with a snap that indicated dire things to come, and she thumped her pillow with an indignant fist. The light was switched off and peace reigned once more in the flatlet.

CHAPTER TWENTY-TWO

WHEN spring came "the dad" was feebler. A long, hot summer in the City was not to be thought of. June studied the ivory-white, too-calm face with miserable eyes, and made desperate by what she saw there, she consulted Authority. Authority nodded ominously and promptly ordered a country suburb where lived another Authority who could watch.

"He—John Orth—is a man we hear from, and are glad to hear from, every little while. Get a place near him, and if anything can be done, he will do it.

Two weeks later June had settled their various belongings in a vine-covered cabin on the edge of Ferncliff, near enough to the City to see its sky-line and feel the vibration of its restlessness.

There were ferns and there was a cliff, but that was the other side of the village. And the other side of the village was where "the quality" lived—as June called them. The Ferriss cabin faced a wooded road and just beyond the bend were several factories, so rents were moderate in June's vicinity.

A weekly trip to the City kept her in touch with her chiefs, her expenses were light, and the change a fortunate one in every way.

The stars helped them move out, and approved. Besides a very large and rather theatrically rural Inn over by the cliff, where guests dressed for dinner and for the hops that were supposed to be informal, there were several less imposing inns where Bohemia foregathered when the heat of the City drove them away.

And the Ferriss cabin, as was the case with the Ferriss flatlet, proved a handy place to have round. A big fireplace in the living room flared out promptly at the least excuse of a cool evening, and June's devotion to burning pine-knots found favour with the elect. Here affairs of state were gravely discussed and weird and wonderful brews carefully concocted; scenarios for coming plays were threshed over and plots of novels dissected.

Away from the City, June, to her own surprise, found her work easier and better. She discovered that she gained by the perspective—type and scenes took on values she missed when too close to them. The tragedies had become a blur of tragedy from which she turned to the respite she now found with sudden and desperate eagerness. Her own battle against odds had wearied her dangerously, mentally and physically, and rendered her comprehension of the battling around her mercilessly acute.

The help given—settlement work, charity, Salvation Army, personal effort—all were so appallingly inadequate. The sardonic humour of the feather duster and the ocean thrust its Gorgon-grin everywhere, to chill enthusiasm into dismay.

Against this sea of misery and vice and disease, born in dead centuries and fed on living weaknesses and appetites, of what avail church, science, altruism, the heartbreak of "benefits forgot"! History but accentuated the hugeness of misery and the futility of alleviation. Civilisation but cracked like a cheap veneer at the first touch of primal passions. The Hague but crumpled like a toy of pasteboard when the primeval Brute smelt blood and tasted war.

Was there an edifice in the building for which there

was a Plan? Had the race a Goal? Had the game a Prize? Had the spirit a Destiny? Had the soul a God?

June, sitting on the doorstep of the little cabin, grateful for the quiet darkness athrill with the myriad voices of insect life, looked up at the purple mystery of the star-powdered sky in a wonder in which her life seemed ever sinking deeper. What was it for, this Blind Man's Buff into which Birth pitched us from one mystery, and from which Death pitched us to another?

For every puzzle but Life there was an answer. But to the great puzzle of Life there had never been an answer of any kind whatever. Religionists had dreamed dreams and seers had seen visions, science had explained and philosophy had apologised, physics had dissected and metaphysics had dilated. Stoics had met death as an enemy and smiling Epicureans had met death as a friend—all had guessed and proved and refuted and stumbled against a stone in the end. What was it for, and why?

It was not worth the candle, philosophy admitted. It was discipline, and the end was doubt, said the Church. Poetry cried "Why do we toil, the roof and crown of things?—and make perpetual moan!" And Art, hungry and pilloried, finds Life with eyes that see not and with ears that hear not, till it crawls into the grave on skeleton knees, and Midas wakes at last to pay toll to the fat-paunched Dealer.

What was it for?

June, in the breathless dark of the spring night, with the lost, lonely note of a night bird troubling the peace of it all, felt her own loneliness closing around her—the individual and universal loneliness of Carlyle's "How lonely is every one in this wide charnel of the universe!"

The man sleeping peacefully in the cabin drifted as peacefully on his sea of dreams by day. In them she had no part and to draw him from them was an effort and success brief. Vagabondia gave her the very good friends that Vagabondians are, but friends are not the friend, the other self with whom silence is more eloquent than speech, sweeter than music, dearer than gifts.

The *dolce far niente* of the Island had given her love that laughed and danced as lightly as a piping faun through the soft green of spring woods. And she had as laughingly and lightly let it go.

In the City, after a long night when she and Dr. Moore had locked horns with Death and fought inch by inch for a woman's life, they stood on the high front steps in the grey dawn, haggard faced, but smiling. And the physician had taken her hands in his and over his haggard face had come a look that hurt her.

"June——!" he said. "June——!"

And June's eyes, and the pain in them, had answered. She loved him, but Love was different, she knew. Love's name stands for so many loves, till the love comes—if it do——. And if it did not come, she would have no lesser love. The world—poor world!—contented itself with the masquerade that it called love—the makeshifts and substitutes that called themselves by love's name for expediency, for price.

And June looked at the sorry carnival with its shabby cotton masks with a pitiless disdain that was, after all, reluctantly pitiful.

To-night in the darkness her arms lay quietly on her knees, her hands drooping with interlaced fingers. But in the eyes lifted to the great Mystery written in powdered silver across the fathomless roof of the world, her spirit stretched out arms to the eternal things that are

hidden. It was the self that called for that other self without whom the whole world and its teeming millions was barren and echoing, and a desolation.

The interest of her work held her and she responded with willingness to its imperious demands. But often brain and body answered with flagging strength to the steady call, and when vitality ebbed, the little caustic sparkle that made her airy and daring sketches unique was lacking.

This was a canker-fear that did not sleep, and hours came, as now when she sat alone with the night and its pulsating mystery, when she wondered wearily if it was worth while to watch for the lode-star. Hands clever and capable offered the nearer lamp of oil, that was bright and warm and comfortable. Its light would mean companionship and safety, rest for brain and body, and peace. To dream of the star, while the years crawled on knees of pain to age and utter loneliness—it was the impractical thing, and life was practical.

With tiredness came always the whisper—what's the use? June Ferriss visualised the whisper. With analytical honesty, she did not spare herself and frankly faced the cowardice as she would a toad, and studied its ugliness with calm eyes. She knew she would have no criticism to fear but her own. Her world would applaud a sensible marriage. It always did. But June was the daughter of her father, and neither cared very much for the opinion of that large and nebulous authority given as "the world." And as her own criticism of the underlying motive in all she did was always pitilessly keen, June Ferriss knew that with the lamp she must accept the little toad with its mocking eyes, whatever respectabilities she might muster in extenuation.

Under the darkness of a big maple, her rustic gate

opened and a white-flannelled figure came up the gravelled walk. It was Graydon Mendoza—Gray Mendoza, he was called—promoter, *dilettante,* and a guest at the Cliff Inn.

June did not move as he swung his muscular body with easy grace down on the step just below her, and very gently gathered the still, white hands into his own.

His healthily tanned face could be clearly seen in the light of the stars, and June looked down at it with a certain, new curiosity. Dark hair was thrust back from a broad brow by impatient fingers, dark eyes sombrely restless, square jaw, a well-set head on broad shoulders —these she saw with a sense of artistic satisfaction. Virility, strength, a splendid masculinity were shown by the easy power of the athletic body and the clear skin where the tan changed to healthily tinged white at the base of the throat.

June freed one hand and drew her finger-tip slowly down over brow and face and throat, where the soft collar rolled back over the loosely knotted scarf. The perfect health that emanated from him enveloped her, and she yielded to it gratefully. She was tired, and life fretted with burden and complexity, and this man, close to her, rested her.

The hand with its exploring finger returned to its mate, and Mendoza closed his own strong fingers over them and lifted their whiteness against his lips. Leaning close to her with his elbow on the step against her knee, he passed one arm around her body, and she could feel the quickened, irregular vibration of his heart. It stirred her pulses to an answering, troubled quickness, and she lifted her face to the cool night breeze with a sharply indrawn breath.

The dark face against her shoulder pressed closer and

Mendoza's lips burned against the thin folds of her gown.

"I love you——" The whisper scorched fiercely up against her throat. "White woman, I love you—I love you——"

He drew her head down till her cheek lay against his temple, where the knotted artery throbbed.

"White woman, I love you—I love you——"

June lifted her head suddenly and drew back, her two hands pressed against his face. He laughed harshly as he dragged the protesting hands down to his lips and kissed them roughly, then looked up at her with eyes that burned into hers through the soft twilight of the night.

"English is a poor thing, after all, isn't it? What have the lovers of history said to the women who touched them to madness with their delicate hands? Have they said anything more than that? I love you—it is the briefest and the final eloquence, isn't it? And you are going to love me, June. I will make you care—you care now, if you would admit it——"

June leaned over him and his face hardened grimly as she shook her head.

"You cannot—— Help me to be honest! You cannot make people love. You do—move me. I am tired and your strength rests me. But that is all."

"But it won't be all," he said curtly. "I am not a boy, you know. When a man reaches forty and loses his head over a woman like you, something is going to happen."

"But don't you understand!——" She threw out her hands with a little despairing gesture. "I want to care—I would be glad to care—I am tired, and I want to give up and turn my problems over to you and not think about

anything any more! I do care—a great deal—but there is something more—it is not enough——"

"It is enough for me—for now." His voice softened and he drew her back into the curved strength of his arm very gently. "I want you to give me yourself and your problems, and leave the rest to me. I will make you love me, and I can be patient."

Perhaps—why not? Had she not heard women say that they had not cared much at the time they married for anything but the wedding finery and the new dignities that marriage gave? Love came after, they said. It began with just respect and affection and was nothing extreme and therefore dangerous. And the tranquil tide had deepened quietly into the stronger tide of mutual aims and interests and was quite satisfactory and "wore well."

That was enough for so many—why fret over the shaded distinctions in a world where life required more than anything the qualities that "wore well"!

On the pebbled walk that gleamed whitely in the dimness, a small object moved without a sound. It was hardly more than a dark spot that changed from place to place as softly as a shadow, but June watched it with a frown.

There would always be the little, soundless shadow——

CHAPTER TWENTY-THREE

FACING Cliff Inn, Dr. Kate Stanley had her office and home. Dr. Kate had been a classmate of June's at college, and a frank respect for each other's often differing opinions had developed into a firm friendship and warm affection.

Dr. Stanley had very critical and very shrewd eyes, much given to suddenly narrowing behind a glittering *pince-nez,* that focused her speculative gaze with disconcerting effect upon her *vis-à-vis.* She wore sack coats and tailored skirts and tailored shirtwaists, and she also wore a corset, but no one would know it. Her well-shaped hands were generally thrust deep into the pockets of her coat, and she stood solidly on her two heels and gazed at the world with disillusioned but philosophical amusement.

She had gone abroad every year since her chin had reached the rail of the liner, and she had tired of that as she had tired of a good many things.

June's advent in the suburb she hailed with satisfaction, and June told her she was the peri at the gate of modernised, all conveniences, Paradise.

"What are you going to do with that Mendoza man? Are you going to marry him?" she asked one morning. Doors and windows were open to the summer breeze, trees and shrubbery were swaying and rustling and erratic splotches of sunlight played across the floor. June, at her big, littered desk, was touching up a sketch, glancing out now and then at Mr. Ferriss, who lay in a

steamer chair in the shade of a big, pattering cottonwood.

Holding two fine brushes between her lips, she shook her head.

"Well, there are brain-storm symptoms. If you don't marry him and disillusion him, you had better do it some other way. Mendoza had a Spanish father and that strain sho' do want what it wants when it wants it," warned Dr. Stanley.

June leaned over her desk and dropped the brushes into a bowl.

"Don't be absurd. How do you like my dryad?"

She held the sketch at arm's length and regarded it with much satisfaction.

"Her left leg's out of whack—she must have bumped her knee. Your anatomy needs absent treatment, June Ferriss. Why don't you quit a while and brush up?"

"Who wants anatomy in syndicate art? Don't be a cat."

"Cats have eyes and so have I. How long is it since you rested from work? Your nerves are jumpy and your bloom of youth isn't what you could brag about, and if you had any sense, which you haven't, you would get out there with Dad Ferriss and eat grass for a while."

June put some delicate shading on the knee of the offending dryad and murmured abstractedly, "Oh, I'm all right——. There, Praxiteles himself couldn't do a better knee than that! It's a dream."

Dr. Stanley sniffed disgustedly.

"I wonder why it is that fools of women all belong to two classes—the class who supply doctors and sanatoria with the wherewithal, and the other class who know it all and can't be told! Mrs. Vaughan at the Inn

is getting ready for her fifth operation. She has the habit. She has spent money on everything else she can think of, and now it's Mills and his Latin labels. If she keeps on she will look like a steamer trunk in the 'V' section. Mills looks like a Greek god in his operation togs, and she seizes every new 'Itis that is made in Germany to keep herself within the orbit of his god-like ministrations."

"Try some fluid extract of dandelion, Kathryn—awfully good for the liver," June murmured soothingly.

"Never mind my internal economy—you may think you can burn the candle at both ends and get away with it, but I happen to be talking in my own bailiwick, and you are going to turn up your toes one of these days, just as sure as God made little apples."

With her doubled fists jammed into her pockets, the physician stood in front of the desk and glowered down at the artist.

"Are you broke?" she snapped.

June laughed and shook her head.

"I have oodles of money—almost all the bills paid—all serene on the Potomac."

"Well, then, listen to me," said Dr. Stanley seriously. "You are keyed up, and if you will just use ordinary common sense you will know that an unrelieved tension means that something is bound to break. You have not stopped once since the smash. You have not only not rested, but there is something the matter with you. I am not a fool, and I don't need an X-ray to read capital letters. What is the matter?—and will you stop for a while?"

June stared at the brush in her fingers for a long moment, then her head lifted and she smiled.

"There's nothing the matter that can be helped—and

a little later—yes, I can manage a week or two, easily, I think. Let's have some tea, *nicht wahr?*"

Dr. Stanley made the tea in disapproving silence. When the little kettle bubbled its steaming stream over the tea-ball, she set June's cup at her elbow and, still in silence, cut some lemon slices.

June sipped her tea meekly, but raised a quizzical eyebrow over the rim of the cup.

"Say it!—may as well get it out of your system, you know," she said politely. The doctor drank her tea with deliberation, then looked at June.

"Why don't you marry Mendoza? You care for him—he is a somebody and has grey matter in his head. He has done things, and he is going to do greater things. He is worth having 'round just to look at—better looking than Adonis and the rest of that outfit. Money, position, a gentleman—and dippy, quite dippy, over you. Why don't you marry him?"

With her arms stretched out on her desk, June stared unseeingly at the flickering sun-patches on the floor. After a long silence, she said slowly: "That is what I, too, am wondering, Kate. Why? I do care for him. I am glad when he comes, I miss him when he is not here, he is good to look at, and I like his arms around me. They are strong arms, and masterful and gentle—oh, he is everything that a woman wants! I know that. But I——"

Her chin dropped to her interlocked fingers.

"Well?" enquired the other, with dry interest.

"Well—it isn't well. There is a something lacking. There is an appeal, mental and physical,—but it isn't the great appeal, Kate. And there is always the knowledge that there could be the great appeal. There may never be—oh, I admit that! I am dissecting the butter-

fly, but if I didn't now, I would later, and that would be ghastly."

"You just had a birthday, you know," she was reminded mildly, and she laughed.

"I know. I couldn't play ingenues like Mocky. And the mother instinct is there, and it bites—hard, Kate! I have rounded up a half-dozen of the mill settlement youngsters whose mothers work, and I have them in my corral back of the cabin days. I sketch out there and tell them stories and manage them generally. They help me and I help them—but I want one of my own. Of my own! I wake at night with its face in my throat and its hand groping across my lips. It is my baby and it is somewhere and I want it! But there is a love that I want more. There is a love that can reach to the core of my heart. It is a love of the mind and of the senses—and of that something else that we can't define, but that touches the hem of divinity. Perhaps I won't find it. Perhaps I will let the loves of these men pass, and life will give me nothing in the end. But just because I know that it *could* give me my desire if it would, I dare not take the lesser love."

The woman physician looked at her with eyes that were too wise, and that were tired.

"And that way madness lies," she quoted grimly.

June lifted her shoulders.

"Che sara, sara," she replied. "If I had not suffered, perhaps I would ask less. But I have suffered——" She clenched her hands suddenly and swung around to face the other squarely.

"I have suffered, Kate Stanley. And I need not have suffered had I taken the substitute course that I could have taken. I could have bought peace and ease and protection with the girl-prettiness that I had to buy them

with. It was a legitimate and legal sale. But I didn't. The pain of body and hell of mind that I have known since you and I packed our text-books have been a crucible. And for that crucible I want my all, or I want nothing. I have paid—paid!—for the best, the highest. I will take nothing cheap. I don't want the gratification of the mind and the body—I want the woman of me mated. If that may be, there is a God over this miserable mess of things that man instituted and called marriage. If it is not to be, there is no God. If our bodies are to breed and our souls starve, there is no Design. We are just animals. But I am going to give that possible God a chance."

Dr. Stanley shook her head.

"Phaeton and the sun—and you are going to smash your chariot likewise. To get that sort of love would be to arch the sun, and we are mortals, worms of earth, my dear young Christian friend. If the masses waited for that sort of marriage, the parsons would starve faster than they are starving now—and God knows that is fast enough," added the doctor solemnly.

"The customs for the masses never can be made to fit individuals," said June. "That is what is the matter with legislation. We make laws, civic and social, on one last and expect them to be worn by feet of a billion shapes. The grocer in the village picked out Mrs. Moss with the same care and deliberation that he uses in selecting a clerk. He told me all about it. And Mrs. Moss was glad to leave the mill and marry the thrifty grocer. The law and the grocery fill their cup of earthly desires. But they wouldn't fill mine, you know."

"N-no, they wouldn't," Dr. Stanley admitted sadly. "You have hitched your little wagon to a star, and by the beard of the prophet there are going to be doin's.

As your friend and medical advisor, I would urge that you marry Mendoza. But you won't, of course. That is the reason I like you. You are an extremist, and a little mad, and while I do not approve of you, you do not bore me. You have not the good sense of my other patients of your admirable sex, but I admit that they frequently do bore me—to tears. You are a real woman, you see, instead of being a perfect lady. And you will find that a real woman will have things made extremely interesting for her by the ladies, God bless 'em. When you make your rude remarks about the marriage job, you touch them on a tender place. The marriage job is about the easiest kind of way to earn one's living, and it is always respectable. About eight of ten of the ladies marry for this reason, and dissipate mildly in pink teas and auction bridge. And they feel sorry for the unwise virgins who let their first offers go by, because they wanted love, and have to clerk in stores and play symphonies on typewriters for their job. It is all very convenient and quite all right and eminently proper, and as long as the ladies are satisfied it is nobody's else business. Or it wouldn't be if it were not that they bear children. And God help the children!"

"Ah—the children!——" June breathed.

"Yes, there's the rub. Nature isn't a perfect lady, you know, and she doesn't care a flip about respectability. Animals obey the 'call,' and mate with the mate they want. And in consequence they breed without degenerating, unless we mix in and domesticate them. When we do, they become polygamous. In the wild state the lady sticks to her chosen lord and he to her. But we, who substitute respectability for the 'call,' do degenerate. Children born of expediency are not the kind that set the Thames on fire. We have a good many of

them in public institutions and private sanatoria. And at home they are not noted for their beauty nor brilliancy. That is where Nature plays havoc with the laws and the prophets. Nature and the law have always been at war. We have kept putting fresh rivets in the law to make it tighter, but we can't get the harness over Nature's head and she continues to get even with us. It's a bad business."

"Yes, it's a bad business," said June slowly. "And they—poor, loveless, heart-hungry women!—it is bad for them. After all, what else can they do? You are brutal about it, Kate Stanley, but as you say yourself, it is marriage or toil—long, long toil that drags like a lengthened chain to dreary and lonely old age. Can you blame them for accepting the poor substitute for love, after all?"

"Heavens, no—they have to live with the man, I don't! But it's the fatal 'ten years later' that is raising particular mischief with things. The other man or the other woman comes on the scene along about that time, and that's where the action of the play really begins. The magnanimous husband who steps aside when the woman meets the right man is the exception, not the rule. And the woman, tenacious of the marriage job aforesaid, who is willing to put the happiness of the man before her own comfort, is a still rarer exception. A young girl who would hound her *fiancé* to death because she found he did not love her, would be stigmatized as brazen, bold and bad. But modesty and good manners seem to die with the marriage service, and the modest girl becomes at once the married shrew. She hasn't the man's heart, but she has a mortgage on his body and she hangs on to that body with every claw set. The man who has merely regarded her with puzzled and regretful awaken-

ing could be held as her friend, and as her very good friend. I have seen one or two such cases in my practice, thank God!—that have helped keep alive some respect for my sex. But only one or two. The others hang on, their womanhood and self-respect thrown to the four winds—and the man's friendship turns to loathing."

"Yet you cannot make them see themselves as their world sees them!"

"No, they won't see themselves. But how women who are supposed to be refined can endure the ignominy of a union that is only physical—that has degenerated to an association whose nights leave memories that sicken in the clean light of day, is beyond my comprehension. I have lost paying patients because I could not stand their hysterical cattishness, and flatly told them to pull their decency around them and try to be women, not barnacles and parasites. That sort of morality is worse than the immorality of the red light. The latter is at least what it seems."

"And they use the children, poor little souls!—as their excuse. The children, with their sensitive, psychic natures, quivering like naked wires to every vibration of inharmony in the home!" June rose from the desk, her hands outflung in sudden, still anger, and went to the window at the farther end of the room. Through its vines she looked out at the laughing little crew playing under her trees.

"It was the first thing that I can remember being conscious of," she went on in a low voice, its toneless calm more bitter than any bitterness. "I felt the discordance —I read the hardness in my mother's eyes, the dead weariness in my father's. They lived together 'for my sake'—good God! And before I was old enough to know

why, I was learning to keep my tears back and my griefs to myself. The air held unshed tears and masked grief, and it bore down my child heart like a pall. I learned not to cry because my sorrows seemed intrusive in that tragic drama of pretence, of smiles that mocked, of pleasantries that lied. I learned not to cry so successfully that one night when I neared womanhood, when a sorrow bore me down till my heart seemed wrenched on a rack, I went down on my knees in the dark with my face on my arms, and prayed, if there was a God, to cry! Because I couldn't cry. I prayed—but I didn't cry," she added dully. "The tears would not come."

Dr. Stanley nodded grimly.

"Yes, you were a cheerful example of that ghastly fallacy that is centre-staged every day—'the home must be held together for the child'! So they hold the home together and incidentally breed a few more children of the body."

The physician laughed and clasped her hands behind her head.

"Lord, lord! How we do use those helpless little lives as a cloak for our own baseness and meannesses! We bring them into the world without consulting their wishes in the matter, and then we begin to present them with our laws. We start by damning them if they die unbaptised. That is one of the 'eternal truths' that we have lately changed. But if the poor babies we committed to hell before we changed the eternal truth have been rescued, or not, we are not informed. Then we brand them with the bar sinister by 'borning' the helpless mite without going through a ceremony—any one of several hundred. And we start it with our own sins, weaknesses and maladies, and whip it because it has them.

"We have built up an enormous industrial system

that is our boast on the narrow, tired shoulders of our young girls, and youth will soon be marked in the dictionaries as 'obsolete.' Our public schools must be vocational—the children must be trained to work before their bodies have been trained to stand upright. They get the barest rudiments of knowledge, are whisked through the grade school and whisked out again to earn money. They are still children, but we put them into the forcing houses that we call stores and factories and offices, and they have given us a queer race of flat-breasted white-faced, premature women. They have children's bodies, but they wear fashion-plate clothes. They have little plastic faces that are pitifully ignorant and startlingly wise. They know too much and not enough."

"And they are forgetting how to laugh! Kate, where are the girls who used to sing and dance and laugh? What have we done with them?"

"We have done what Japan is doing, my dear," replied Dr. Stanley. "We, the Christian people, have taught Japan, the heathen, that children are a gold mine—that girls make riches. And from us Japan has learned to coin its youth into gold. I don't know who is to blame—the socialists will tell you, perhaps. But we are too poor to have youth any more. We cannot wait for bodies to mature, for minds to take shape and become steady. We are too poor, honey! The day of doiley-making under the trees after the dishes are washed is gone. Great Pan is dead. Progress is god. Wealth rules, and so the world is poor. The world wears tiaras of precious stones on its brow and it rolls like a triumphant goddess on noiseless wheels across continents. And that it may do this, Youth, who once laughed, is now taught silence and decorum, attention and efficiency. Pan is dead—laughter and song and colour and warmth and dancing died with

the god of the woods and winds. An artificial semblance of this joy of dead years is shown in polite society, but the 'masses' must not laugh. When young girls whisper the little nonsense whispers of the dawn of life and love, they are reproved sharply and told to attend to business. We are making them attend to business, my dear. Oh, yes, it is an age of wonderful success!"

The physician screwed up her shrewd eyes and grimaced, then continued with unctious emphasis—

"We want them to be happy—dear me, yes! But we don't want them to laugh in the factories because it interferes with work, nor in the office because it isn't business ethics, nor in the store because it makes the nice customers peevish, nor in the home because the family is nervous, nor on the street because it isn't proper. With these few exceptions, they may laugh as youth is meant to laugh, if they can find any place we have not policed!"

June, once more busy over her drawing board, quoted softly: "Do you hear the children weeping, oh, my brothers!"

"Mrs. Browning was a poet, my dear," said the doctor briskly. "What do poets know about practical matters? Tut, tut!"

Peeling off her soft felt Stetson and coat, she announced that she was going to get dinner, and June's protests were snappishly overruled.

"You say that you must finish those alleged drawings of yours this evening, so if you will make a stagger at getting the joints of those scantily draped female persons of yours approximately where they are meant to be, I will get a dinner that will make Dad Ferriss sit up and take notice."

"He's weaker, Kate!"

Dr. Stanley scowled anxiously as she rolled her shirt-sleeves above her elbows.

"Yes, he is," she admitted shortly. "I wish Dr. Orth would get back from Berlin. What does Carl Goethe say?"

"Dr. Carl says there is—a chance," June replied in a low voice.

"Well, he knows Orth and surgery better than any one else and he never serves out fairy-tale hopes for the sake of making polite conversation. So brace up and do try and keep some of your good looks. You are getting spooky and it doesn't suit your style."

June was still working when Dr. Stanley left and that short tempered lady, meeting Dr. Goethe at the gate, expressed her mind in a manner brief but to the point.

When he entered the living room, June looked up with a bright nod.

"Exit Xanthippe—enter Æsculapius, the healer!" she laughed. "Kate thinks she is a doctor, but she isn't. She's a virago. You should have heard her giving me what for, just because I wouldn't enter the holy bonds of matrimony!"

Dr. Carl looked at her with keen blue eyes that were very penetrating and very kind.

"Dr. Kate's tempers are a weaker woman's tears," he said in his quaint German way. "She worries over the father—and you. He is in the bedroom?"

The voices of the two men, already warm friends, came quietly to June's ears as she bent over the board putting in the finishing strokes. The shaded light at her left sent a soft effulgence over her desk, leaving the rest of the room in heavy shadow. Through the wide open door the moonlight now flickered on the floor in patches of silver.

It was quiet, restful, but the woman at the desk was listening to the weak voice that she loved and that she knew was growing weaker, and in her white face there was no reflection of the night's great peace.

Laying aside the little brush at last, she stared at a packet of papers held by a rubber band in one of the cases on her desk. They were bills that meant the slow ploughing of a water-logged ship. They held her back and they held her down. She dared not relax nor rest.

With her left hand doubled into a fist and pressed into her side, she was leaning on her other elbow with the knuckles of her hand against her lips and her eyes closed, when Dr. Goethe returned.

The big German physician studied the still face in silence for a long moment, then he said simply, "It is pretty bad?"

June nodded without opening her eyes.

Then the doctor laid his hand on her shoulder.

"The adhesions—we, with our science, can do nothing, you see. But if you would marry, if you would have a child, nature would in that way readjust. You work, and you have anxieties, and where the body is injured, it resents. And so—the pain! If you would only marry——"

There was no answer from the quiet figure half in the light of the lamp, half in the shadow where the silver of the moon touched the still white folds of her gown.

The physician walked up and down the room with bowed head, then turned to the couch, drawing up a chair beside it for himself.

"Come, *liebchen,*" he said gently.

The white draperies swept quickly across the floor and June crouched down on the couch, her arms across the doctor's knees and with her face on her arms.

The doctor's big, gentle hand smoothed her hair with sure touch and his deep voice was wonderfully tender as he talked to her.

"We will have one of the little stories, *nicht wahr?* It shall be about the *Tannenbaum*—about the little tree, and the little gold heart. The little tree was alone in the snow. Its companions were taken, one by one, by joyous folk for their Christmas festival. But no one chose the *Tannenbaum,* it was so small——"

The old, sweet German folk tales were his remedy for the woman lying prone on his knees. No solace of religion nor philosophy was there for her and the soul of the Vaterland understood. For nerves and heart quivering like an overtuned instrument there could be no instruction. And so, when the waters rose deep and bitter, Dr. Carl drew the head with its smooth coils of hair down on his knees and told her of the *Tannenbaum*—of the tree left lonely in the snow and the night, and the little golden heart——

CHAPTER TWENTY-FOUR

ONE evening the Vagabondians foregathered at the cabin for the reading of a new play by Huntoon. June was relegated to the couch, where she lay restfully among her cushions and surveyed her small but quite audible court with amusedly fond eyes.

Tweed doubled his six feet four on the couch tailor-fashion at her feet, waved his favourite long "stogie" in a smoky benison and told the playwright to proceed. Miss Sherbourn, Miss Hazleton, Dr. Stanley, Dicky, the artist and Dr. Carl, glowering benevolently through a big cloud of smoke from his priceless meerschaum, settled themselves comfortably and ready for the storm of criticism, suggestion, argument and protest that the occasion generously promised. Gray Mendoza sat on the window sill, his splendid head thrown back against the frame, and blew silver smoke wreaths to twine among the vine leaves.

Huntoon pulled an ottoman forward to the middle of the circle and shook out his bundle of manuscript. Then he skimmed over cast and stage set for the first scene and with the wonderful mastery of voice that had carried his fame wide, he read the play.

Silent and observantly intent his audience listened, following voice, expression and little significant gesture with quick understanding to the end. Then Huntoon looked up and said, "Well?" His wife was the first to answer.

"Should not your woman have divorced your man in the second act, of her own accord? You make her weak by having her forced into it," she objected.

"The eternal triangle——" exclaimed Tweed doubtfully. "Do you think you can make a go of that threadbare three-cornered tragedy unless you strike a newer note—a more unique solution?"

"Oh, it is dramatic enough—but your political plays are stronger, Wayne," said June. "Masculine action is your *métier,* and you are bigger there than in your society plays."

Dr. Carl nodded.

"He is bigger—yes. But it is a question of which public he wishes to play to. His political plays appeal to the intellect—his others, like this, make more money. The great public wants to see its own perplexities acted out, its own problems illustrated. Ibsen, with all his subtlety, still reaches the public because he held up the mirror. He belittled them, and cut their weakness with whips and corroded their shallow sophistries with acid. And they cringed, but they went back again. Self study is always interesting. The pen dipped in the pricked vein will always write words that will be read. Ibsen's solutions did not solve—whose do! But he dissected with a sure touch and we follow the little knives that fascinate even while they stab."

And so the war was on. Line by line the play was fought through, its logic tested, its "business" whittled, its sentiment weighed. Huntoon defended, protested, conceded, made annotations on the margins, scratched out and interlined.

Big mentally, he valued at its full worth the warm storm of criticism and objection that swept his play back and forth as its small first audience sat in judgment.

Later they would praise. Opening night they would be there to pay tribute. Always they would glow with a

warm and personal pride in the finished artistry of this, their brother and well-beloved.

But to-night they were critics, searching with pitiless eyes for flaw and weakness, for the smallest crevice where danger lurked. And this frank custom of Vagabondia, this swift and merciless honesty, is what makes Vagabondia unique and its people lovable. Pleasantries and half-truths falter to abashed silence before the astonished stare of these children in enthusiasm and patriarchs in wordly wisdom. Generous, good-natured, broad-minded and indomitably brave, they have neither time nor patience for the evasive and conciliatory methods of the cautious. These gentry, of another world than theirs, are not to their taste. On the stage, with pencil or pen or chisel, Vagabondia "pretends" with inborn art. But outside of its art, there is not a people so utterly indifferent to the criticism of the discreet, and therefore so frankly themselves.

When Huntoon and his play had been disciplined to their satisfaction and his own serene content, the little gathering trooped away, still occupied with last suggestion and lingering argument.

When June turned from the door, Mendoza came forward. In the dimly lighted room, with its one shaded lamp, he looked unusually big and determined. June leaned back against the door and looked up at him, a suggestion of dread, of shrinking, in her attitude.

"I wanted to see you alone—I wanted you——" He spoke a little thickly then stopped and drew her two hands up to his breast. "I—I am going away, very soon. It is an irrigation project, up the Nile. It will be out of the world—its desert places that we are going to give back to the world as a garden. It will be what we did West, but a far greater thing. It will be a wonderful thing——"

Bending his head lower, he looked into her eyes compellingly, masterfully.

"You are going with me," he said steadily. "I want you, as I never believed it possible to want any woman in my life. You are going with me—white woman! White woman!"

In his powerful hands her own twisted helplessly.

"No——" she breathed. "No——"

"You are going with me——" The twisting hands he drew up to his lips and kissed them, finger by finger. "You are going with me."

"I cannot—my dear, my dear! I cannot. I have tried—but I do not care—in that way—not enough——"

Her head fell forward on the hands that held hers, and he bent and whispered against her hair.

"I love you so that the world reels at the very thought of losing you. I love you, and I have tasted hells and Heavens of infinite variety since you gave life meaning for me. I have tried to think of a world without you—but I cannot. I see red——!"

Releasing her hands, he closed his arms around her body and crushed its soft length to him. "I love you—I love you, sweet!——"

She felt his heart pounding against her own, that beat answeringly, and she tried to thrust herself back—away from the great strength that was sending its wonderful vitality into her own body.

But the arms were arms of oak and her weakness thrilled to their pressure even while she thrust up a protesting arm across his breast and throat. "Gray!—you do not understand! I do not love you—I would never love you—you must let me go——!"

The words came chokingly, desperately, as he laughed.

Then he raised her chin with one hand, holding her eyes with the passion that leaped and blazed in his own.

"Listen to me," he said harshly. "You care for me—I know that. I don't care how nor why, and I am not quibbling with Destiny. I want you on any terms. I want you—Good God! Don't you know that men have killed such women as you, loving them as I love you!" His voice softened, and holding her head against his breast, he kissed her eyes, her face, her throat. "I will give you my strength," he whispered. "I will take you out of this treadmill—this damnable grind—to the Nile where the days go by in golden dreams and the nights are long poems—where you will hear the strange call of the boatmen, and the low, long echo call that answers through the moonlight where the waters slip past the palms, as they did a thousand years ago. We will go back to that old, old world, you and I, and gather some of the richness of its beauty. 'Dost like the picture?' " He quoted in low, tender triumph as he felt her strained body relax and yield and rest against his own, as did that Lady of Lyons who listened to the word-painting of that other scene. And his lips whispered, close to her own, the rest of the picture—" 'And when night came, amid the breathless Heavens, we would try to guess what star would be our home when love becomes immortal ——!' "—Why not? Why fight, while youth and fairness and hope died their long, weary death?—Every fibre of her body cried for rest, for surcease from pain. The man who held her and warmed her chilled and fainting veins with the splendid vitality and fire of his own, loved her. It was not the light, impulsive faun-love of the Island and its spring-time. It was the deep love of a man who called to her brain as well as to her senses. And her brain and her senses responded as they never

had before. His work, the redeeming of great, desolate places and making them beautiful, in which he had a wizard's cunning, a master's success, opened wide vistas. The little, narrow struggle with the hundred petty tyrannies of the day; her dainty, sharp, creative gift that had degenerated into the drudgery of "pot-boilers" whipped from a dulled brain and fagged body—what promise did they hold?

She had stumbled on beneath a yoke too heavy for so long, and the yoke was slowly forcing her down. And when it did—what then?

Through the thick fog of weariness, of what use the far, cold gleam of the lode-star? Had life place, after all, for the perfection she had dared dream of? Was it not the impractical visioning of the lotus-eater, the imaginings of an *exalté* that had no part in a world where the flesh-pots of Egypt ruled existence!

"'The beams of our house shall be cedar, and our rafters of fir!'" he was whispering, his fragrant, healthy breath warm across her lips.—"'His left hand is under thy head, and his right hand doth embrace thee—Let him kiss thee with the kisses of his mouth: for love is better than wine——' My sweet!—my flame-woman!——" The whisper melted into the night's soft silence on her lips, and with closed eyes she drifted on waves that were of fire and wine-sweetness, as he lifted her closer still to him and under his mouth her own burned. To drift—so! To live in every stinging vein. To be loved as this man loved, with the completeness and passion of manhood's zenith in years and physical perfection—was not this enough? To be loved and to love——

Like a needle of ice her pitiless self-analysis pierced down through the waves of rose-fire in which her brain was swimming, and she tore her lips from Mendoza's

and with head thrown back, looked up at him with eyes haggard and horrified. To love——? She did not love him. What, then, was she?

"It was—because I was—tired," she stammered, desperately. "Don't you see?—Don't you understand?—There is something wrong. If I gave myself to you, I would hate myself—and you!"——

CHAPTER TWENTY-FIVE

MR. FERRISS became seriously ill and June's work now followed the round of the clock. A kindly woman from the mill district came in for odd hours, but the nursing itself June managed somehow, striving to keep her sketch work at least saleable, for to this level it had now fallen.

With wonderful control of action and voice, she managed to deceive even those who watched her anxiously and closely. The strain of harder work and broken rest she fought against with set teeth as her father's life wavered down like a dying candle-flame, but she was finding that the floor was beginning to billow uncertainly under her feet and her brain was playing her tricks that taxed her will to the utmost.

The first cool breath of fall was in the air and the evening brought need of the fire to take the chill from the cabin through the long nights when she was up and down, in thin night clothing, waiting on the restless invalid. He was too ill to understand reasoning and any one but his daughter near him caused distress and an acceleration of the fever. So she fought through nights alone and others helped in every way they could to ease the running of the wheels daytimes. One night Dr. Stanley lingered late, very uneasy, though June tried to reassure her.

"Oh, I know—you are fine and could take in washing by the day and make a fortune," she said impatiently, "but all the same things are going to be different and you will find that obstinate people cannot run the universe all the time, though they want to. The boys have ar-

ranged a loan for you at the bank—regular bank interest," she explained crossly. "So you needn't be snippy. The bank will give you all the time you want, so you will just drop those would-be art things you are inflicting on the public, drawn with one eye shut and the other blinking, and nurse the dad. We will see to the cooking and the rest of it. You are going along on sheer nerve and according to symptomatic deduction and conclusion, you ought to be dead, very dead. But you aren't yet, so we will try to head you off and we are going to run things ourselves. This is your last night as boss."

After she had gone, June turned from the door where she had managed to call after her a laughing good-night and staggered to her desk. With no witness before whom she must act, her will buckled like a defective iron girder, and she drew open a drawer of the desk, took out a bottle and poured some greenish liquid into a glass. The bottle was marked "Strychnia" and her hands were shaking as with the palsy as she lifted the glass and drained it.

Very draggingly the heart answered to the whip, and she looked at the bottle with eyes strained and desperate. It was failing her, and her father's life—the life that gave her own life its one meaning—was hanging by the frailest thread that only her own hand must touch; her hand made psychic by love and steady by resolve.

His weak voice spoke her name in the next room—but breathed her name. But her ebbing strength answered to the faint word as it would not answer to the drug, and she sped noiselessly into the quiet little room where the cameo-beautiful face watched for her from its pillow.

Very steadily and carefully she ministered to him while the night crept on with hushed tread. Out in the darkness the trees rustled softly and her dazed brain slipped back to fair and tranquil years. It was the low

wash of the surf that she heard—she was back in the Island bungalow and the little cabin under the trees was as though it had never been. It was the Island, and the heavens were pouring their silver with divine prodigality down on the wide waters and sleeping shore. The surf was curling in snowy, jewelled plumes along the sands, and the rain of pearls and crystals showered elf-music far and near.

Far out where the purple shadows stooped to the purple lake, her gods called—her gods of the winds and the waters, her gods of the wild, free things. She had lost them, somehow—she must have wandered far and missed her way. But the voices called her—called her cheerfully, jubilantly, and her heart leaped to the old witchery that claimed the pagan soul of her—the unbounded spaces, the unharnessed winds, the majestic thunder of royal waters, the cold, clean sweetness of spray and rain on her face, the imperial sword-thrust of lightning across mountainous clouds, the organ reverberations that shook across the firmament with the thunderous wrath of warring gods—to all this her soul answered with eager and awed worship. Her gods spoke and her soul stretched out wings to divine, hidden souls that claimed her.

Here gods were. But in the world whose nightmare yoke her spirit had cast off in the final exhaustion that frees or kills, she could find neither gods nor God. There was only the nightmare, that broke hearts and bodies on altars that each generation erected and overturned.

Her father was sleeping, and she groped her way out toward the voices—the low flickering light of burning wood guided her—it must be a driftwood fire on the beach, and she made her way toward it with outstretched, groping arms and failing limbs. Its warmth

reached her at last, and she sank down thankfully, her heavy head on the curve of her arm.

On the soft earth road before the cabin a horseman pulled rein and dismounted. Throwing the bridle over the post of the little picket fence, he went up to the door and tapped softly.

It was Gray Mendoza. Before him stretched the long, winding road that led to the glow on the night sky that meant the City. There a ship waited, and the first part of his journey across the world he was making on the back of his hunter. The blood that pounded through his head and heart would have suffocated in a train. To-morrow, on the ocean, perhaps he could throttle the madness that had held him sleepless for nights, and readjust the ruin that seemed crashing, day and night, down on all his sick senses.

In the pale light of the stars his face shone ghastly white and haggard. Deep furrows between the eyebrows and the straight, hard line of the mouth told of battling mind and body. And furrows and line told of the veneer of modernity cracking under the primal heat of Spanish blood, the primal fire of Man, to-day the cave-man of yesterday.

A great work waited overseas, but in the little cabin was the woman whose white hand had touched his breast and left there a molten lava in which was withering every desire but the want of her. And so before he went overseas, he knew that he must hold the woman again against his breast, for the memory of it——

Again he tapped, and the door yielded to his touch. In the farther room the night light burned dimly, and in the still fainter light of the living-room fire he saw the thin white folds of a woman's gown. It was the

woman he sought, prone on the fur rug, her face half hidden on her arm.

He lifted her to the couch in his muscular arms with swift ease and knelt beside her. The breast rose and fell regularly, her lips were a thread of scarlet in her white face, but the sleep was the dead sleep of stupor—of Nature's wrathful precaution where the mind totters on its throne.

"June!" he called hoarsely. "June! June!"——

And obedient to the harsh command, her eyelids trembled, lifted, and the eyes looked through heavy mists of dead weariness up into his. Then he laughed.

"You're whipped, miladi! You're at the end of your fight. I will have the say of things now. It is almost daylight and before sunset you will be Mrs. Graydon Mendoza."

CHAPTER TWENTY-SIX

BEFORE sunset she was Mrs. Mendoza. Dreamily obedient, she had murmured the little perfunctory phrase that made her a wife. Dreamily passive she rested and listened while Graydon Mendoza sent telegrams and hastily, but methodically, arranged for a month's postponement of his departure. And she only roused to protest when he planned her removal from the cabin.

Then the passive drifting that yielded without question to all that was said and done about her, was disturbed by a vague trouble, a groping distress.

To all other arrangements for the care and comfort of the sick man and herself, she consented with the utter indifference of exhaustion. But any reference to desertion of the cabin brought the white, languid figure up from its cushions to strained and startled defence.

So that plan was, for the time, abandoned. The wings of death hung, low and dark, over the little house, and the days passed with the sense of unreality that hovering death gives the homely and practical offices of every-day life.

But after two weeks the shadow lifted. The quiet marriage had caused but little comment. To the "familiars" it came as a solution and a relief, and now the slowly returning strength of the invalid, the great peace that follows departing fear, augured well for the conventional safely "happy ever after."

From the heavy apathy that had held her, June had slowly wakened only to turn with feverish absorption to the cartoon war she waged for the children. Her

husband, busy rearranging his disordered business and again getting ready for a long exile in Egypt, was in the City daily, and Dr. Kate, frankly possessed of "the fidgets," sought the cabin at odd intervals. She invariably began to talk animatedly, subsided soon into silence, shrugged a rude shoulder at the absorbedly industrious figure at the drawing board and took herself off in a bad temper.

This mental attitude began to assert itself during the latter half of the month Graydon Mendoza had allowed himself for a honeymoon. The last week of his stay arrived. He was to sail Wednesday, and Tuesday morning Dr. Stanley, a tightly rolled newspaper gripped in her hand, unceremoniously shoved open the door of the cabin and entered.

June was alone, sitting at her board but not working. The morning paper lay on the board and across it her eyes met those of the physician.

"Oh, you've seen it?"

The words were quite matter-of-fact and the speaker leaned with marked ease of manner against the shelf over the fireplace.

June nodded but did not speak and the doctor, drawing her cambric handkerchief across her face with a handsome but slightly nervous hand, beamed down on her pleasantly.

"Awful nuisance—of course you and Gray will have to jabber through the 'I wilts' again to re-tie the knot. But it's lucky the vilyun was exposed before Gray had gone! Over two hundred marriages rendered 'null and void,' the paper says. And he's skipped out, the shpahlpeen! Who would have thought it, to look at him!"

June was patting the paper softly with her finger-tips

and the doctor cleared her throat and continued a little hurriedly:

"Gray has read it on the train by this time and I suppose is thanking his stars he hadn't yet sailed. You wouldn't go over seas to him while the dad is so weak, and altogether, it would have made an awful mix-up. However, you can invite us to hear the 'wilts' now. I suppose he will be out on the 2:10 as he planned, with a J. P. under one arm and a parson under the other, to make sure this time!"

The finger tips still softly patted the paper and the doctor's diaphragm, within its comfortably loose corset, rose and fell with a long, careful breath. June's gaze rested meditatively on the resolutely pleasant smile on Dr. Kate's lips—a smile that struggled heroically with a look of sick comprehension that flickered behind the sparkling lenses of the *pince-nez.*

Then she spoke,

"But I'm not going to re-marry him," she said gently.

Dr. Kate swallowed visibly, but without replying she walked to one of the windows and looked out. After a little, she turned and faced June.

"I rather hoped you wouldn't say that, but I can't say I did not expect it," she said evenly. "I concede all that you—have not spoken of. He took you when you were physically and mentally whipped and he married you. He is of the blood that doesn't count costs nor care about method. He wanted you at any price. No one could have checked his blind resolve that day, any more than they could have roused you from your apathetic acquiescence. And no one was given the chance to try. He married you, and you did not protest because there was no fight left in you, and he knew it. But

you were married, you are his wife, so why not let it go at that? Why begin now to tilt at wind-mills?"

"Wind-mills? Is the honest adjustment of the rest of my life only that?" asked June.

"Oh, I know! I have seen you waking up and I was pretty sure that things were going to break. But see here, June! Just be practical and worldly for once. Never mind the essence of things. Take the adulterated and coloured and flavoured syrups that we wallow in like flies and swim with the crowd. What's the odds! You won't find your little tin god, and Gray's several pegs above the rest. He used cave-man means to get you but most women like that sort of thing—it pleases their vanity to be bullied and bossed. Lay down your arms and let the old world wag! It is too big for you to oppose it. It will only break you!"

The speaker orated with impressive and convincing warmth, but the shrewd eyes, through their glittering glasses, noted very uncomfortably the calmness that did not rise to argument. It was a bad sign. "And, anyhow, common-law marriage will hold you," she hurled finally and with the desperation of a last play against the calmness.

"Common law will not hold unless appealed to, and Gray is a gentleman," was the quiet and discouraging reply.

The doctor, after a long silence, asked with resigned grimness: "Have you taken into consideration what 'they will say'?"

A little smile softened the thoughtful gravity of June's lips.

"I have thought of even that!" she replied soberly.

"Oh, that's all very well!" Worry and exasperation were undermining the physician's surface-quiet rapidly.

"You can take the bit in your teeth if you like, but 'they' means the pack, and the pack will go after you tooth and claws. It will say that Gray was tired of you—or that he had good reason for dropping you. It will say that you didn't dare hold him. It always damns the woman. And it will pull you down and leave you stripped of the last rag of decency. It would never understand your point of view in a thousand years and it wouldn't believe you on a stack of Bibles. You will be 'hoist with your own petard'—gibbeted on your own altar. Everything you have ever said and done will be twisted and distorted and used as evidence to show that you are bad. That is the world, my fair friend!"

"And that"—the voice that answered was low, even, amused—"that is what you would have me truckle to!"

The doctor stared dumbly and June said quietly, "Your world has my permission to exercise its talents and its unclean imagination in whatever manner it pleases. The picture you have so vividly painted is the best argument I could use. That type of people may go its own way, as best suits it. But I must insist that I be permitted the privilege of going mine. I am neither married nor mated to Graydon Mendoza. The ceremony that would have held our bodies together, while our souls wrestled, was illegal. The chains have fallen. And I am not going to put them back because I am afraid."

The doctor lifted hands and eyebrows, and sighed. "On your head be it!"

CHAPTER TWENTY-SEVEN

WITH Mendoza, as with the little circle of intimates, the struggle was sharp but final. Ferncliff related and re-related the story of the marriage that was no marriage after all and of the departure of Mendoza to the trackless deserts of Egypt.

After much lively speculation it was decided that the daughter of James Ferriss had been practically deserted. No other explanation could be accepted. The rumour that she had declined a second ceremony was brushed aside as preposterous, and Ferncliff went out of its way to pass the little cabin, hoping to get a glimpse of its anguish and humiliation.

June, however, disappointed. She looked remarkably well and cheerful. She also displayed a tranquil indifference to Ferncliff and Ferncliff's deductions and conclusions, and Ferncliff then decided that she was not wronged, but brazen. She had been "queer" anyhow, said Ferncliff, and this affair was only what might be expected.

Meantime, Drs. Kate and Carl began to lose professional interest in her, and devote themselves to the task of building Mr. Ferriss' strength up for the expected coming of the surgeon, Dr. Orth.

"You will look as vulgarly healthy as a dairy-maid if you keep on," Dr. Kate informed her disapprovingly one day. "Just because that Goethe man and I are wonders as physicians and pulled you up on your feet when you were trying to commit slow suicide, is no reason why you should aspire to look like one of those Robert

Chambers heroines. They all have arms like lady coal-heavers and I don't like it. So stop where you are."

June grimaced impertinently and gave the hairbrush she held a professional flourish. She was brushing her father's wavy, thick, grey hair while he sat contentedly listening to their banter. Through the window he could see the little band of June's "youngsters" trudging gleefully through the snow on the way to their homes around the bend.

When winter drove them from the grass and trees that had been their "school" during the summer, June gathered them each day into the cabin, where they enjoyed themselves while she sketched. She told them fairy and history stories and guided the little eager hands and minds along the first uneven paths of craftsmanship. It was all play and its variety was carefully guarded from any intrusion of effort or weariness.

Dr. Stanley looked after them grimly.

"I tackled that 'Varsity group just one day, when your fair daughter had temporarily retired from public life," she told Mr. Ferriss. "I cut out some of those impossible dolls and Jimmy Smith looked at them, and then at me, with lofty pity. 'Our Mummy June doesn't double their ankles and make them stand on their bones like that,' he informed me with forced politeness. 'She pastes little cardboard sticks on their backs and makes them stand on their own feets.' Me, the best anatomist in my college, snubbed by that mill prodigy of six! I did not know as much as their Mummy June, and was very plainly shown that I was a rank outsider. You may run your own missionary branch, June Ferriss. I have resigned."

"You were fired, you mean," laughed June. "Bully

for Jimmy! He knows genuine erudition when he sees it."

Mr. Ferriss looked at the little band trudging sturdily down where the road curved, soon hiding them from sight.

"Poor little soldiers!" he said dreamily. "June is teaching them to stand on their own 'feets' and a little farther down the road they will need all that she can do for them. It is a long, long road and it is hard for young travellers."

The winter passed quickly, serenely gorgeous as a very great lady clad in royal ermine and many jewels, in frost of lace and shimmering sheen of silvered broideries. Dawns of amethyst and rose and amber flushed delicately across fields of palest and coldest steel blue. The sovereign sun turned these to dazzling white, where icicles flashed and fir trees were etched blackly and wonderfully. And the end of the day was a glory, the night solemnly beautiful as a master's requiem.

This splendour of the country in winter June greeted with keen appreciation. The great burning pine knots sent fragrant whiffs through the little cabin, the winter sunlight streamed through the small-paned windows where sturdy geraniums flamed, and the crisp creak of the snow under passing wheels, the jingle of sleigh-bells, the shouts of joyous coasters on the hill, were a joy.

All too soon the snow shrank to shaded hollows, the ice-cloak parted over little hidden streams that gurgled laughingly back to the world, and a venturesome robin stood on the fence-post and called gay defiance to lingering threat of frost-nipped toes.

June, in her soft gown of white wool and with a white scarf twisted around her head and shoulders, stood in the

doorway and called coaxingly to the robin, who cocked a speculative eye on the dish of crumbs she brought out for his delectation. The air was cool, but still, and the open door made little difference to the ruddy heat that filled the cabin from the blazing pine.

Mr. Ferriss, in his comfortable arm-chair, watched the flames whirling up the big chimney and smiled at the robin's tentative and brazenly flirty notes as he edged nearer to the bits of bread, and listened fluffily to his hostess' blandishments.

Dr. Stanley, perched on the couch with her slender, clever hands locked around her knees, followed the progress of the flirtation amusedly. June's coaxing had won this pioneer with the red waistcoat from the Southland and as she leaned quietly against the door frame, the bits of bread trickling between her fingers, he fluttered his wings jauntily, threw caution to the four winds and came up to the doorstep with a little run.

"You look like the spirit of spring, yourself, June," the doctor said, studying the carefully quiet figure curiously. "You are not in the Amazon class by a good many pounds, but you are not spooky as you used to be—you look—different, somehow. You are—what is it that she is, Dad Ferriss?" she cried impatiently. *"Qu'est que c'est?"*

The man before the fire looked long at the face smiling down at the little guest. It was pale, but illumined somehow, where the afternoon sunlight streamed through the bare branches of the trees down on her bent head and the long, straight folds of her gown that swept from the narrow girdle beneath the bust to her feet.

"The pale flame in the lamp of alabaster," he murmured softly.

"Well, be the oil holy or magic, we are out of it," as-

serted Dr. Stanley. "It is a sort of a—transfiguration business, don't you know? But what is doing the transfiguring? It isn't codliver oil, because she won't remember to take it. And it isn't the joy of our society, because she has that anyhow and had it long ago. It isn't her gown, because she always wears those plain and economical things and manages to look Burne Jonesy in them and deceive the public. She hasn't got religion, and she isn't in love, and she hasn't been recently cured of indigestion, so it is beyond my feeble intellect. What is it, June?"

June smiled as she looked after the visitor who was strutting back to the fence, having finished his dinner with every evidence of approval.

"What is it?" She lifted her eyes to the tender blue of the young spring sky—the beautiful "virgin's blue" beloved of artists. And she spoke slowly, a little wonderingly, asking of that pale and fathomless mystery rather than of herself or of those who listened. "I don't know what it is—but the spring, and the young newness of things—the strange waiting for hidden and lovely things eager to bloom and live—the divineness that the brown trees and the wet earth and the surcharged air seem to breathe into my nostrils—oh, I can't explain, because it doesn't explain itself to me! But all that outdoors is trying to tell me something, and it thrills me, even while I am too stupid to understand why!"

Dr. Kate studied the landscape dubiously and shrugged her shoulders.

"Well, I dunno," she reflected. "Of course, it's nice to see the spring getting things ready for the morning-glories and early vegetables and all that. But I can't say that I feel particularly thrilly about it. It is lack of artistic temperament, I know, but I am chiefly interested

in the fact that I forgot my rubbers and my shoes are damp."

June laid her head back against the door with a gay, ringing laugh. It bubbled as gleefully as the little imprisoned brooks that were dancing their way out to the sunlight and freedom.

"What a barbarian you are, Kate Stanley!" she cried reproachfully. "How can you look at that picture of sky and hills—more beautiful than any Turner!—and put up lamentations about rubbers? Go to, thou heathen!"

"That all sounds well," the doctor replied tranquilly. "But if I get the sniffles, I won't look like any Turner. When I have a cold, I am a sight for gods and men and cross as a bear. Here! Whoa-up, steady there——!"

With a lithe spring, she reached June's side as she swayed like a reed and caught her in her arms.

Supporting her to the couch, she lowered the white figure gently down on the cushions and slipping her sensitive finger-tips to the extended wrist, the doctor waited in puzzled silence.

June's eyelids fluttered uncertainly and then opened. Her father, tall and anxious, was bending over her and she smiled up at him.

"I'm all right, dad dear!" she said reassuringly. "I didn't faint, and I'm not going to. It was just a dizziness. Take me to my room, Kate—I'll rest there awhile, and it will pass away."

In the bedroom she caught Dr. Kate's wrist and held it tensely.

"Kate, what is it? What happened to me? I felt so—so strange! Not ill—but wonderful. I—it was not me—but it was part of me—oh, I can't explain! I don't know how to explain. There aren't any words,

somehow. It was—it was your—'transfiguration,' that was it!—that I felt. But what is it? What is it?"

The startled, tremulous voice was shaken by some terrifying joy, and it sank to an awed whisper as she leaned weakly back on the pillows.

Dr. Stanley fumbled in the pocket of her coat in silence and drew out a stethoscope. This she fitted into her ears after first slipping her arms out of her jacket.

"I don't know what it is, but if I am anything at diagnosis, I am going to find out," she replied with resolution. "Now, young person, heart first!"

In the living-room, Mr. Ferriss walked uneasily up and down. From the big, glassed-in gallery at the back came the treble murmurs of the little " 'Varsity crowd," June's charges. The great pine-knot in the fire-place chuckled and hissed and played fairy pyrotechnics that sent swaying plumes of tiny sparks up the chimney.

Turning back to the open door, Mr. Ferriss saw Dr. Goethe coming up the gravelled walk. Behind him, three of the mill women were turning in the gate.

Dr. Goethe looked grave and troubled—the women sullen and excited.

Mr. Ferriss looked from one to the other in courteous interrogation as they grouped inside the door in awkward silence.

"What is it?" he asked at last, gently.

At that moment June, who had heard them enter, came into the room followed by Dr. Stanley who paused and stared at her brother physician in stunned bewilderment, a bewilderment so great that it gave no heed to the others in the room.

June, tranquil and smiling, looked at the women enquiringly.

"What is it, Mrs. Simmons—Martha—Lucy——?"

The women fidgeted in frowning uncertainty a moment, then one—Mrs. Simmons—blurted out desperately——

"Nothin'—only—we want our children."

"This early? But they never go as soon as this. What has happened?" June asked in surprise.

"Why—well, we don't want them here no more, that's all," Mrs. Simmons said doggedly, and her companions nodded and muttered, "That's it!"

"You don't want——! Why, good gracious, woman, what is the matter with you? And with you other two?" June moved forward till her hand rested on her desk and looked at the women impatiently. "Speak up! I am teaching your children, and caring for them and feeding them, and they are happy. So will you please tell me what bee you have in your bonnet? They don't want to go home!"

"Well, they'll learn to want," Mrs. Simmons flared in sudden, jealous resentment. "We're respectable married women, and we bin hearin' scandal long enough about this house, an' we are goin' to keep our children home after this. Their own homes is good enough, I guess, if they ain't stylish."

CHAPTER TWENTY-EIGHT

JUNE stared at the three women in turn, in astonished silence for a moment, then finally drew a long breath of enforced patience and enquired, with quiet interest—

"Will you please tell me just what scandal you have heard about this house?"

Her eyes reached, and held, the scowling, pale-lashed eyes of the spokeswoman, Mrs. Simmons, and into the latter came the slow, dull fire that smoulders in the petty soul when it looks on superiority that is gentle and gracious.

"If you want to know, we kin tell you mighty quick," the woman answered. "I bin doin' your cleanin' a right good while, an' I ain't a fool. I got you sized up about right with yer picter-makin' and yer show-actor friends, for all you aimed to make us think you was so respectable. An' when that night las' fall one of our folks seen your lover leavin' here after midnight——"

June held up her hand as the men stepped forward, and checked them.

"Wait!" she said quietly. "All this is very interesting and there is something back of it we must understand. Go on——" she added to the woman. "You saw a lover of mine leave here after midnight——?"

"Yes—they seen him against the light when he opened the door an' stepped out."

"Yes? And what else is it that you say you have learned?" June asked.

"June! This is absurd. Let these women take their

children and go." Dr. Stanley started up impatiently, but again June raised a detaining hand.

"No," she said. "I want to hear what they have to say. It is really interesting. Well, Mrs. Simmons?"

The mill women, angry at their own embarrassment before the undisturbed woman who questioned them with unfeigned interest in her low voice, clustered together with elbows touching for mutual encouragement. As they hesitated, a small boy, Mrs. Simmons' youngest hopeful, opened the door from the gallery, saw his mother, and hastily closed the door again.

This fanned the sullen flame to reckless fierceness and Mrs. Simmons threw off the nervous hand of the woman nearest her.

"We know what the rest of the town will soon know, I guess," she said with a hoarse laugh. "Them white theayter dresses o' yourn ain't goin' to hide it much longer, my fine lady!"

"Ah——!" As the little breathed syllable left June's lips, she sank on the chair at her desk and leaned forward with her face in her hands. The eyes of the physicians met in flashing question and answer. Mr. Ferriss regarded the various actors in the quietly tense situation with close, but unruffled interest and it was Dr. Goethe who turned to the women with slow, Teutonic anger gathering in his eyes.

"You have said enough—yes? You will now take the *kinder* and go—go at once," he ordered.

"Oh, we're ready to go fast enough," the mill woman said impudently. "But you'll notice she ain't denied it!"

June lifted her head and her hands, lightly clasped, she rested softly on the drawing-board.

"Wait——." She said the word quietly as she had said

it before, but a new timbre in the voice startled those who heard her into moveless attention.

"You are telling the truth——" Her eyes met the sullen, baffled eyes of her accuser with an odd luminance in their depths—a luminance that flickered and danced like the sunlight on water. "I am going to have—a child."

Her face was grave. There was no smile on her lips, but in the eyes that seemed fathomless there was unmistakably a glint of triumphant, joyous laughter.

"You are telling the truth. Only—you do not seem to understand. Why, are you so stupid—all of you!" she swept her glance in gay derision over the puzzled faces turned toward her. "Can't you see?"

She rose from the desk with a tremulously tender laugh and lifted her arms as a bird lifts its wings just before flight. Then she sped to the door of the sun-room and opened it wide.

"Come, you little youngsters, you are going home," she cried, and turning back to the mill women she met their eyes squarely. They tried to face the look, but it searched down into their hearts like a lambent flame. It was the mother-look, royal, unreachable. And the cowed mill-women shrank back before it in stupid submission.

"Take the children. You just—didn't understand, you see," June Ferriss said gently. "I am going to have a child. My own—my own baby! My—own baby. So go away to your homes, and go down on your knees, and pray that my baby may be strong and sturdy—as I have tried to make yours. Go!"

"We understand, of course, that this attitude of your daughter is all the result of her bringing-up—it is the fruit of your transcendentalism," Dr. Stanley remarked judicially to Mr. Ferriss later.

That gentleman smiled into the fire and lifted one interrogative eyebrow.

"Of course it's your fault," the doctor insisted tartly. "If you had brought her up the way the young women are fitted for life nowdays, she would be wearing musquito-bar waists, spending her evenings in cafés and discussing eugenics with her men friends. Then she would marry for money or position and be respectable."

"The gods forbid!" murmured the defendant comfortably.

"That's all very well, but you sort of people belong to the overwhelming minority, please remember. Your kind of respectability isn't the fashion, so it is improper. And morals are like clothes—you might as well be dead as be out of the fashion. I don't think that is 'Sartor Resartus,' but it sounds epigrammatic enough to be. Perhaps Carlyle didn't think of it."

The doctor, first thumping a cushion to fit her back, settled herself comfortably on the couch and hugged her knees.

"June's cue, when those impeccable harpies launched their arrows, was to curl up—grovelling hysterics—crushed Magdalen—that sort of thing. She was bringing a new soul into the world without benefit of clergy, so she was outside the pale and the new soul was promptly damned before it was born. It was hard on the new soul, but it would protect the rest of us. If we should brush elbows with a new soul who was not properly tagged by the evangelical Customs House, something awful might happen. So we greet it with the bar sinister and feel that we are safe. We are real nice hospitable people when you come to think of it."

The philosopher, who was listening in smiling silence as he contentedly watched the flames, shook his head.

"It is all, as June said to those excited women, that they 'do not understand,' my dear. The world is big and complex and busy, and it has blocked out a rough working plan. And it works along in a rough way. It has no time to analyse. Individuals chafe, and gather into sects and communities, each with a new set of details for the crude plan of the many. And then the sects war; and as individual problems arise, the members of a sect war with each other. So they in turn dissolve and disband and disintegrate, as all human lives and laws disintegrate. But yesterday we committed the unbaptised to the eternal sulphur pit. That, as Ellen Key's biographer says, is one of the 'imperishable truths' now antiquated. We will discard some more 'imperishable truths' to-morrow. But the many forget yesterday and to-morrow—they forget that we are just groping, and that nobody can be sure if they are all right or all wrong."

"No, the forgetteries of the *hoi polloi* are their strong point," agreed the doctor. "Their perfect satisfaction with themselves and their little one-day horizon is as pronounced as the facility with which they can drift into 'benefits forgot.' June and her work with the mill progeny, *par exemple.*"

"June did not work for thanks, and the children themselves do not forget!"

"Well, she isn't much concerned just at present, I'll admit. She declined to take her cue, which I have referred to, and apologise to the proprieties for being alive. By all the canons of polite society, she should have fled to another state to hide her shame. That is what we call it—only we don't call it. We whisper. Then she should have come back apologetically, leaving the shame in some orphan asylum, and we might have forgiven her enough to bow, with facial reservations—

sort of blending of condolence and discretion, as it were. Did she do this, James Ferriss?"

James Ferriss admitted perforce in amused pantomime that she didn't.

"Of course she didn't. She is your daughter—the daughter of a father who wouldn't know what expediency meant if he read it in the dictionary. We didn't get a chance to take her up. She doesn't know she's dropped. What's the use of being a Christian and forgiving a sinner if she doesn't know she's a sinner and doesn't give a whoop for your forgiveness? I have tried to be nice and magnanimous to your daughter, and she only looks at me with eyes brimming over with absurdly lovely dreams and informs me, with an air of sovereign condescension, that 'if I'm a nice lady, and behave myself and get a Gorham mug, maybe I may be god-mother!' "

Dr. Stanley sniffed with pardonable indignation.

"I was reared by rich but honest parents," she continued aggrievedly. "And I have a nice disposition when people let me have my own way. But even my long-suffering patience is strained when that aggregation of alleged talent comes out here Sundays. They are blithering—simply blithering. They sketch her as Bodenhausen's Madonna, and write verses and wrangle over names, and are as absolutely happy as if each were a grand chamberlain and they were expecting an heir to all the Russias!"

There was a swift frou-frou of drapery as June came into the room with an open letter in her hand, perched herself on the arm of her father's chair and kissed him on the top of the head.

"I have a letter from Nora," she announced happily. "And she is coming back."

"Splendid!" said her father with much satisfaction.

"Bread!" the doctor remarked with a reminiscent gleam in her eye. "Nora is a jewel. She makes bread—real bread. Not that feather-pillow stuff that we consume under that title. Three cheers for Nora and long may she wave! When does she arrive?"

"This week, praise be! Bless her heart, she saves the cost of her 'board and keep' by her economies. When Nora serves a casserole, we carefully refrain from going into particulars. Miss Casey is always blandly non-committal, and while we surmise that the contents of the dinky dish is a collaboration of former days, we surmise inaudibly."

The doctor nodded approval.

"Nora is one of the vanishing race—one of the genius cook-ladies who can take Tuesday's bone and Wednesdays leftovers and make a cleverly seasoned *pièce de résistance* that will make the most critical *gourmet* grow lachrymose with gratitude. Ordinary educated cooks want a market at their backs. The born artist takes what is at hand and does the impossible. That's Nora."

"What Nora?" enquired Dicky through the open window. "Don't all artists do the impossible? Don't we live in spite of doctors, diet and debts? Who is this Nora person whom you eulogise so fervently?"

"And the Philistines came down on the fold," murmured Dr. Kate resignedly as the "talent" filed cheerfully in the front door and swarmed around the pair in front of the fire-place.

"'Lo, doc," Tweed cried cheerfully, shaking her hand vigorously. "Here we are!"

"No, you don't say!" Dr. Stanley responded with elaborate interest. "Will the assembled company please inform me why people who write clever things never give any evidence of it in their conversation? I am not

criticising, you know—merely thirsting for information."

"Sweet thing!" grinned Tweed affectionately. "Has her a pain in her wee tummy small?"

The physician wrinkled her well-chiselled nose, of which she was justly proud, at the novelist and he placed himself beside her on the couch and held her hand "while they made up," as he informed the others.

"Sea-food supper, June child!" the playwright was meanwhile declaiming over the Babel of voices. "Shipped in from the beach this morning by an ardent admirer. Clams to steam—beauties!"

Sundry hampers and baskets were "toted" to the kitchen in readiness for the usual week-end programme and the elect gathered comfortably around Mr. Ferriss' big armchair.

June, who had returned to the broad arm where she sat and leaned against her father's shoulder, looked down with amused, contented eyes at "the boys" lazily stretched out on the rug, at Clara and Mocky and the doctor, clever women all. They were such a frank, loyal, affectionate lot, these folk who worked like Trojans in the great profession of amusing the world, and of healing its ills.

Ephemeral, perhaps, the outward and visible results of their mission. But was it the less worth while? The doctor's work was admitted. But the others—what of the hours of long grilling rehearsals, of one-night stands, late jumps from town to town, bad food, poor beds, cold rooms, of going on and carrying a part nobly and airily though sick with pain and heartsick with worry!

This was the soldier-duty of player-folk, the bravery that refuses to lie down while there is motive power left in the body to stagger through the scenes of laughter

and tears, only to crumple up afterward on the top of a stage trunk.

Generous, clever, good-natured, uncritical, they laughed their way cheerily through ills and over obstacles, carrying their hard times with a dauntless and resolute philosophy that refused to see defeat, and that battled for existence with a serene and optimistic courage that no other profession could equal.

Mr. Ferriss, from the heights of his philosophy, looked out with tranquil detachment at the little warring and squabbling that made up the most of life. And from the broad plateau from which he looked with pitiful tolerance down upon the internecine strife where friend misjudged friend, kin hurt kin, he saw, closer to him in the charity that seeks out the best that is in one and ignores the rest, these people of the stage and of the world that offers a little nonsense to leaven the world's huge woe.

Dicky, forgetting his laboriously ground-out jokes with which he kept the erratic pot boiling, was doubled up tailor-fashion on the floor with his back to the wall, making a study head of his host and blissfully waving a tyrannical pencil to indicate "chin up"—"eyes lower." Mocky and Clara were heatedly arguing about the degree of perfidy in those frivolous persons who caused stage "waits" and the consequent necessity of soul-racking improvising for the unfortunates who were holding the scene from ruin. The rest were skimming over the ethics and metaphysics of Ibsen and Shaw, of Emerson and Tolstoi.

"It is all a question of whether one prefers to be honest, or discreet," Tweed was saying apropos of the growing social unrest. "Tolstoi and Ellen Key are the firebrands that are ahead of their time and that always

precede the electric torch of a Bartholdi Goddess of Liberty lady. They are struggling out of the morass of custom that holds us and chokes us. We know that it is all wrong and very unhealthy, but we know that to protest raises a devil of a row, so we stick to the morass and pretend that we like it. Key's soul, like George Eliot's, knows no boundaries. Both women battled up through the calumny and vicious jealousy of mean little natures that swarmed like red ants over them. Ignorance and cowardice always hates that which it can neither reach nor emulate. They suffered, of course. The lion suffers from the envenomed sting of insects. But they never whimpered, those lion-like women. They never offered an excuse. They just fixed their eyes on the big and clean and wholesome and great, and refused to compromise. Praise all the gods for them!"

" 'Do good for good is good to do,
Scorn bribe of Heaven and threat of Hell,
Tear the old woman from your breast
And wait—the tinkling of the camel-bell' "——

Huntoon quoted from Burton's "Kasidah" through a fragrant cloud of smoke. "We have held the 'old woman' of fear to our breast so long, it will take a surgical operation to get rid of her. We first knew her as religious superstition. Then she became a habit. We have all quietly dropped the brimstone business, but we sheepishly wear the old woman for the same reason we wear hot and smelly woollen coats when the thermometer is ninety—because the other fellow does. Women won't. They shed the coat and get into thin toggery, and they shed the husband who pans out different to the assay

and take upon themselves one that they can live with in happiness. And both for the same reason—that women are a little more fastidious than we are and very much more brave."

"Well, I wouldn't put it as strong as that," said June. "Women are more frankly radical than men, but a man's viewpoint is naturally different. He is the protector, he must shield, and his sense of honour keeps him a martyr to a mistake, where a woman's sense of honour drives her to remedy the mistake and get her life on a cleaner basis morally."

"It is Jeanne d'Arc and her intuition. It leads armies, where the generals wait to study the map," Clara put in, smothering Mocky's clinching argument with a cushion. "This is the idea——"

Reaching over Mocky, she drew one of Key's books from the open shelves that surrounded the room and read an extract from a Key critic.

" 'I do not believe it is moral to regulate life by considering the desire to remain undisturbed of those that are decayed and petrified.' There it is in a nut-shell. Not that I wish to be personal in my remarks and accuse the perfect gentlemen here present of being decayed and petrified. But the fact remains that it is much harder to pry them loose from the established order of things, than it is the gentler sex."

"Got your eye on some benedict, Mrs. Huntoon?" her husband enquired suspiciously.

"I have my eye on those ashes," she replied severely; "June, he's dropping them back of the couch!"

"Well, they don't show there," Mr. Huntoon explained pleasantly.

"Exactly!" laughed Mocky, who looked like a little

girl down on the big fur rug with her shoulders braced against "Dad Ferriss' " knees. "A man's ideas of housekeeping are like his morals. Keep up a brave front—never mind the dust and bones behind the scenes!"

"And the fuss he makes over the franchise, which he knows is a losing fight!—shows how he hangs on to Custom like my terrier to a bone," added Dr. Stanley. "Look at England!—blessed, pig-headed, stubborn England!"

Maj' Henry Dascom chuckled and gallantly ranged himself on the side of the ladies.

"As, for instance, when the Giants played the White Sox in London—the first game His Majesty King George attended, you remember!" he said. "Just when the game was hottest an Englishman remarked that 'it was time for the interval.' The interval means the pause for the afternoon cup of tea. Yankee beside him gasped and enquired 'Why?' and was fixed by a pained stare. 'Why, because it is quite customary,' the English gentleman explained patiently."

"Devout worshippers of the great god Precedent," said Mr. Ferriss, patting Mocky's curly head. "Like the deceased wife's sister bill, that became almost as sacred an English institution as Westminster itself. It is now moral to marry the sister-in-law, but only recently became so in England. If it has been decided now that it is moral, why was it not always moral? And if they are right now, and were wrong, how are we to know how many other of their standards, based on precedent, are right?"

Tweed promptly fished around in the shelves for June's "Kasidah."

"Let me get Burton on that," he exclaimed. "Sir Dick has it down fine. Here you are——

" 'There is no Good, there is no Bad;
These be the whims of mortal will:
What works me weal that I call 'good,'
What harms and hurts I hold as 'ill':

They change with place, they shift with
Race; and in the veriest span of Time,
Each Vice has worn a Virtue's crown; all
Good was banned as Sin or Crime:' "

"What a wonder-man he was," said June softly, looking into the fire with dreaming eyes. "Lady Isabel loved him from the first and gave up society, wealth, ease, luxury, to follow him into the desert. He always 'heard the East a' calling' just as the yoke of civilisation began to settle down on his neck and the woman who was his comrade became vagabond—happy vagabond!—with him. She loved and served him, and so his desert spaces were her fields of Arcady. To love like that! To love like that! Just once to love like that, to the core of one's being, to the inner temple of one's soul! How it would—repay!"

To love like that—— !

The little group of people who lived life to the fullest, who loved "Ruffian Dick" and his gipsy soul, looked, too, into the fire where they could see the little tent of marble that held at last the restless body of the wanderer. "Pay, pack and follow" were always the instructions to the woman who loved and understood, and who obeyed orders with soldier bigness worthy the soldier soul of her. And on the little white tent of stone she had the old, familiar "marching orders" chiselled—"Pay, pack and follow,"—the orders she waited with soldier patience permission of Life to obey.

CHAPTER TWENTY-NINE

JOHN ORTH was born on a farm and made his first obeisance to medicine by way of the village doctor's wood-pile. By easy stages he progressed to the doctor's house, where he proved handy in the cellar, kitchen, attic and, as a badge of honour, was given the entrée of the "pillery."

This was a wonderful room where the old doctor concocted wonderful compounds for patients all over the countryside. It had a well-stocked drug-shop along one wall, a surgery along another, and a third was covered with books.

The old doctor—Dr. Amos Smith—was not long in trying out this youth whom he had brought into the world, and soon had him busy with pestle and mortar. He made pills, filled capsules, compounded prescriptions and sterilised instruments with a precision of touch in the hands that had wielded the axe with scientific accuracy in earlier days, and Dr. Amos grunted approval.

The old brown leather-backed books began to come out from their long retirement and then John began to ask questions. The questions were brief and Dr. Smith's answers were long; but they were never too long for the grave-faced boy who kept his grey eyes unblinkingly on the face of his preceptor.

The old doctor had a daughter, Hannah, who took after the distaff side of the family, which was not noted either for its cleverness or its good looks. Hannah was plain, limited intellectually, and knew it. She had

passed the marrying age some time before John had reached it, but she married John.

He was never exactly sure himself how it happened—a condition of mind that a large percentage of Benedicts are familiar with, if the truth were known. But he accepted his new estate without protest, if without enthusiasm, vaguely resigned to Hannah because of Hannah's father's pillery.

He moved his few effects to the doctor's home and became his assistant. He was taciturn by temperament, Hannah because she did not know of anything to talk about, so the streams of their lives flowed along side by side without turbulence, if without commingling. John Orth's exterior was quietly grey, with a disturbing suggestion of uncharted, and unchartable, depths. His wife was neutral in every particular, a term which catalogued her quite obviously and finally.

After awhile John's father died and John sold the farm and went to a medical college and qualified for a diploma. The word "qualified" is used advisedly in this instance. A good many graduates just "get" one. Which little distinction has a very distressing effect on their unenlightened patients.

Doctors are born, not made. Medical colleges go through the motion and confer the title, which is quite a different thing. And in consequence a very great number of people who are taken sick and who get well again, recover in spite of the physician called in, and not because of him. But they don't know this, so the profession flourishes and the colleges wax fat.

It would have been as difficult to keep John Orth from being a physician, as it is for the obliging medical faculties very frequently to kick enterprising but uninspired "talent" out of its long-suffering alma mater with

its fully paid-for diploma. John's hard and practical schooling with his old friend sent him to college with a knowledge many of the out-going graduates had never reached and would never reach. The hand that had wielded the axe on Dr. Smith's wood-pile was slender, with small, supple muscles playing like a mesh of steel wires under its very fine skin. Swung by its grasp, the axe-blade had always struck "true." And later, when he balanced a tiny instrument on the length of his index finger and guided its point against a glove-kid cushion to test a tip so fine it could not be seen by the naked eye—when the instrument, unheld, would penetrate the kid by its own light weight without moving from its resting place, the hand was as steady as though chiselled in stone.

When Dr. Smith died, the Orths moved to the City. The silent, dynamic force that had carried John from the wood-pile to the pillery now carried him from the obscurity of a village practice up where the wise men of his profession greeted his name and himself with a regard at first curious and later respectful.

A number of years of City practice resulted in a small private hospital located in Ferncliff for patients who were cases of peculiar interest. The quiet John Orth of former days could not well grow quieter, but the grave face had controlled all expression of emotion for so many years it had assumed the cold immobility of a mask. Dr. Orth never glanced at anybody or anything. His eyes always turned with deliberation and when they reached the object, paused there, the lids motionless, the gaze inscrutable. The object, if animate, met the inscrutability with varying emotions. From the man himself there emanated a distinct sense of attraction, a paradoxical blending of utter indifference to people, combined with what we call magnetism, not knowing what magnetism is.

And this sense of attraction that drew, with the deadly, slate-cool grey of eyes that repelled, ended in many cases in vague irritation that finally nursed itself into distinct antipathy. The small soul instinctively resented the reserve that met its volubility with silence and its assertiveness with uninterest.

Those more determined in their liking, on the other hand, shouldered past the uninterest, held by the intangible charm that so obviously made no effort to charm!—and giving their devotion, resignedly aware of the fact that the object of it did not know that they did and probably would not care if he did know.

One child, a daughter, was born to the Orths. She—Helen—looked at the father with his own strange eyes and the two alien souls understood each other. Alone with the child, the mask lifted a little, and she knew the man it shielded as no other living person did. This psychic recognition meant to John Orth a wonderful camaraderie that, up to then, his life had missed, but the Law of Compensation that treads Nemesis-fashion on the heels of happiness, was attendant here. For Hannah, the neutral, had not been familiar with the "pillery" for nothing, and after the child's birth her husband learned that even neutral types have their part in history-making. And Hannah, the unimaginative, was "dreaming dreams" born of the poppy's poison.

CHAPTER THIRTY

WHEN the Orth residence, which was adjacent to the hospital, was opened and word went around that the family had returned from their long stay abroad, Ferncliff was conscious of a pleasant stir of interest.

The presence of the surgeon meant many pilgrimages to Ferncliff of people more or less interesting, even if invalids or semi-invalids, and the quiet suburb was always grateful for any ripple across the rather monotonous, if placid, surface of its existence.

And the Reverend Holman Drake took occasion to drop in the Orth home to tell its master so.

Holman Drake, D.D., was fat, fair and fifty. His rubicund face denoted the comfortable intelligence that accepted, and did not question. He was not at all interested in abstruse problems. He acknowledged readily that Jonah and the whale might have been either fact or fancy, and he really could not see that it mattered anyhow. The world, the flesh and the devil were things it was quite proper to preach against theoretically, but he took a frank and epicurean interest in the flesh-pots that pertained to the first two, and his twinkling eyes bespoke a broad and even sympathetic charity toward the cloven-hoofed but clever personage credited with being the father of the world's evil.

Even the devil had his good points, in the estimation of Mr. Drake. His badness emphasised the respectability of goodness and meanwhile made life pleasantly interesting to the conservative but appreciative onlooker. Mr. Drake's caution—which he termed Christian incorrupti-

bility—would always prevent his being devilish, but his inclination—which he termed Christian tolerance—leaned strongly toward those whom his cloth recognised as the devil's wayward disciples.

This quality of broad-mindedness Mr. Drake found to be a not invaluable, as well as convenient, asset. It spared him a too steady diet of incorruptible society, which, if estimable, must be admitted to lack the unexpectedness that gives salt to existence and which must not be underestimated. And his intellectually polished senses responded pleasantly to the titillation of a witty if naughty world, while his bump of caution aforesaid rested comfortably secure in the knowledge that his enjoyment was vicarious.

In other words, Mr. Drake would never permit heart nor temperament to turn his immaculately polished boots down the Primrose Path, but as an onlooker on its blossomy bank he was piously grateful.

It must be recorded with regret that this broad-mindedness in its rector was chiefly responsible for the fact that most of the seats in artistic and fashionable St. Giles were occupied on Sundays when the weather was pleasant and counter-attractions were not too extraordinary. St. Giles was very high church, had adopted the incense and the ceremonial ritual of Benediction with the lighting of altar tapers, and was seriously considering the confessional. This odour of artistic sanctity, the stained light that streamed through Tiffany windows, the surpliced choir with mortar-boarded women, the great silver cross on the broad breast of the rector, the sonorous intoning of the litany—all these were really suggestive of "Parsifal" in their mysterious charm. And the kindly eyes of Dr. Drake were not depressing in their effect when they inadvertently turned a smilingly reproachful regard

on a little game of bridge that might aid in passing a quiet Sunday afternoon.

Dr. Drake prided himself on keeping abreast of the times. He was well-groomed physically and mentally. He discarded last year's clothes that had any suspicion of shiny edges, and last year's ideas for the same reason and with equal ease. He diagnosed the congregation as his friend, Dr. Orth, diagnosed a patient, and unlike the physician of bodies, gave to the diagnosed what it wanted.

In all this, the rector was not altogether insincere. It might be said with reason that he was entirely sincere. Dr. Orth's profession made strides and changed its text-books and its methods, and ministering to souls need not be fixed in its method of procedure! All life groped, effort felt its way, progress climbed painfully through mists.

Dr. Drake did not insist that his way was the one only way to be saved. He saw to it, however, that his way was a very nice way, and this practice reacted most comfortably on St. Giles' treasury. His orthodoxy was of the cushiony order. It had no sharp corners nor rough edges. He accepted placidly what his theological alma mater had taught him, and he accepted also placidly the little modifications that became advisable now and again as the public developed symptoms of temperament.

For his friend, Dr. Orth, he had a very high regard. The physician was not a churchman, but his orthodoxy was sterner and more strict by far than was that of the rector of St. Giles. The rector noted this with friendly sympathy for the futility of such a high standard. People, he reflected, were pretty much of a muchness the world over, and one must not expect too much of life so complex. His own genial aspect of men and matters made him popular, and when a rude wind sometimes blew

over a leaf that bore rough reading, the rector sighed regretfully and proceeded to forget about it as soon as possible. He found that things always worked out somehow, and there was really no need of growing excited about anything.

"Quite a number of interesting cases awaiting you, Orth," he now said, as the doctor placed a humidor and matches at his elbow. "Goethe said he wrote you about Ferriss. Fine thing if that man could 'come back.' Clever lawyer and an interesting man. We are all anxious to see what those wicked-looking knives of yours will do for him."

The cold grey eyes showed a flicker of interest. The little game of life and death when Dr. Orth matched his skill against an unseen foe, when his nerves of finely tempered steel held a breath fluttering across lips damp with death's own dews, called to a gambler's instinct that lived under the inscrutable exterior. He dared, and his daring went far toward the little guide-post that marked the parting of the ways. But the steady eye and hand, the unemotional and unhurried brain, supported his daring in a fashion almost uncanny, and his *confrères* knew that it was not science alone, but the psychic signalling of a sixth sense, that enabled this silent man to stake a life on seconds.

"Yes, Goethe wants me to see him soon. He has been very urgent about my return for this—personally much concerned, it seems."

Mr. Drake nodded, his eyes twinkling with interest through the smoke of his cigar.

"A number of us are personally concerned," he corrected. "James Ferriss is not only an exceptional man, but he educated an exceptional daughter along his own peculiar lines, with results."

He smoked vigorously a few moments while the other made wreaths and watched them float out of the window with half-closed eyes.

"Ferriss believes in individualism and he opened to the daughter all channels of knowledge. He accompanied her, but did not coerce. He advised, but did not dictate. She grew up familiar with facts as well as theories. And she goes to facts—to the root of things, with a startling indifference to what is customary. When the smash came, his affairs were in bad shape and Miss Ferriss had to be the bread-winner."

A cube of silver ash was deposited with care upon the edge of a bronze tray, and Mr. Drake regarded the glowing end of his cigar thoughtfully.

"She opened a hospital—or rather took over one that Moore had—you remember Ike Moore? And I guess she saw enough of life there to finish the education Ferriss had started. Her ideas are not—er—conventional. She is very much interested in children—sort of adopted a lot of the mill district youngsters days, while their mothers worked. She does those scratchy sketches for the papers, with short foot-note stories that have a 'bite' in them. And some months ago she—ah—had a child—a boy."

Some more smoke wreaths floated out of the window, then Dr. Orth turned his gaze upon his visitor and recalled his own thoughts that were plainly wandering.

"You were saying——? I beg your pardon, Drake! But I missed——"

"Well, hang it all!" the perturbed divine exclaimed with desperate determination. "You will have to understand the situation before you go to the house, and Goethe won't have time to explain. So I will have to tell you."

CHAPTER THIRTY-ONE

KATE STANLEY and Goethe strongly advised her to go away and let the story blow over, as it would had she gone at once. Nobody could prove anything, you see." Mr. Drake explained after he had told his story. "But Miss Ferriss would not even argue the matter. According to her viewpoint, the child was coming, it was her child, neither it nor the mother was guilty of wrong, so what was there to conceal? That a lot of people would not believe her, did not trouble her in the least. She said that what people believed or what they approved had nothing to do with what 'was.' She was very much interested in the child, and the ethical side of the matter did not interest her at all. It was all most extraordinary and baffling."

The white and beautifully cared-for hands of the clergyman were lifted in a despairing gesture.

"Ferncliff, of course, was divided into antithetical camps. There was talk, and criticism, and scandal, all the way from the Inn down to the mill. But the subject herself was the least disturbed of any one. Of course it would have been better—much better—had she gone away. But she declined, with entire calmness, and—well, one must admit that she is remarkable—extraordinary!——"

Mr. Drake sighed and wiped his brow with a snowy handkerchief that bore his crest in microscopic characters in one corner. The stitchery had been done by one of his aristocratic parishioners, for whom he had a tender but purely platonic regard. Mrs. Drake was

an estimable helpmeet, in the full and practical sense of the word, and no one recognised her worth more than her husband. She was constructed on a generous scale —slightly billowy as to figure, with a cheery voice that "carried" and a healthy interest in everything and everybody. She was a clergyman's daughter, with an abounding executive ability that simply suffered in inaction, and she married the young curate's vocation with the young curate himself thrown in.

And the young curate himself, as the comfortable years rolled on, gave thanks. His caution had selected this energetic helpmeet who managed him with the same large enjoyment with which she managed the Ladies' Aid Society and all the other societies, and if he ranked as rather less important in the eyes of the bustling lady of affairs, she at least never neglected the practical matters that contributed to his physical well-being, so they understood each other perfectly and were excellent friends.

The irreverent younger members of the congregation used to whisper, "Here comes the High Priestess of pickles, paupers and preserves!" when good Mrs. Drake would sail breezily down the aisle, sweeping a bright and appraising eye over the well-bred throng. But she was undeniably popular.

The wife of a clergyman, like that of a physician, requires qualities that are unique, if she keep the battered little bark of matrimony off the rocks. And this was something that Mrs. Drake understood perfectly. Mr. Drake's large and sympathetic personality, his well modulated voice—and he sang divinely!—and his breadth of view where tempted and oft-tripping humanity was concerned, made him an ideal father confessor as well as a delightful friend, and the members

of his flock, men and women, young and old, hailed him variously as "a brick" and "a dear."

Incidentally, if eyes softened now and then to a slightly tenderer interest, no harm was done. Mr. Drake knew exactly the amount of tender interest required to hold his temperamental parishioners within the shelter of St. Giles; he was able to calculate with careful nicety just how far the bridge table might be permitted to encroach upon the plate, and the incumbency of St. Giles represented to its rector the Alpha and Omega of the desirable things of life. His caution would never permit him to risk, in the smallest degree, the litanies and luxuries that rounded out existence so pleasantly for him in Ferncliff.

Consequently, Mr. Drake's platonic friendships, while tender, were safe, and there was no suggestion of a "divine passion." Divinity might direct soul to soul, of course, where mortal laws would let loose the tempest. But Mr. Drake was not the type that would invite the tempest. He was satisfied with the loaves and the fishes that abounded in the Valley of Conventions. And in his wisdom, he waxed imposingly fat and prospered, while his wife, equally endowed with the world's wisdom, blinked tranquilly at the tender friendships and slept o' nights.

"My wife has always been interested in Miss Ferriss—Dr. Stanley introduced them—and she upholds her." The rector accepted and lighted a second cigar, then resumed;—a suggestion of emotion in his voice disturbing for once the careful modulation so familiar to his public: "You see, the maternal instinct is very strong in Mrs. Drake and it has always been—we—well, a child would have meant much to my wife—to us both——"

The pleasant eyes lost some of their twinkle as their

gaze wandered out over the tree-tops to the cloudless blue that veils life's explanations. In the mill district so many children crowded in the homes that were so shabby, and so many of the children were unwanted by their weary and generally draggled mothers. While in the stately rectory, with its spacious park where the Tiffany windows of St. Giles glowed richly through the shrubbery, there was so much room for dancing feet, so much silence that seemed to listen for a child's laughter!

"Of course, we have to look at these matters from a safely conventional viewpoint," Dr. Drake again adopted his pulpit voice with a sigh. "But it is very difficult to hold to one's convictions when one sees June Ferriss and her baby. The child is wonderfully perfect and the mother's mental attitude simply places her on another planet. She looks down on us, Orth!—positively looks down on us, politely patient, but sympathetic, by Jove!"

There was a faint smile on the physician's face as he rolled his cigar reflectively between his fingers.

"Charitably tolerant of our limitations—is that it? So you have a rebel in your camp, Drake. I have heard of James Ferriss—we used to know him as a coming man. The daughter of such a man ought to be a little above the average, but this young woman would seem to be rather a dangerous type. The world cannot afford individual anarchy. And we must rely upon our women to keep up the old and tried standards. Why haven't you converted her?"

The clergyman smiled wryly through a fragrant silver cloud that he sniffed with appreciation.

"Perfect leaf, that! Convert her? Why didn't I? Well, I'll tell you why I didn't convert her. Oh, I tried all right! June Ferriss in church work would be a power. Mrs. Drake and I could have used her in my

diocese, and she would have been worth six ordinary lieutenants. But it is as I tell you. She is on another planet—our way of considering things simply doesn't reach her. She admits that she is pagan. But she goes farther, for the pagan fears his gods and she doesn't. I had a serious talk with her one evening—it was just before the child came."

He looked at his cigar gravely, then laid it on the tray and leaned forward on the broad arms of the chair, clasping his hands before him.

"We spoke of the danger—she is not strong, and she had been working hard for a very long time. Goethe and Dr. Kate were nervous. Well—I asked her if it would not be better to let her scepticism go—to just accept as a child, and feel that she had a hand in the dark that was coming. She was lying on the couch, and she turned her head and looked at me with an odd little smile. And—well, I had wanted her point of view, and I got it!"

He remembered well the calm, clear-cut sentences, and he gave a summary of them to Dr. Orth. He had been startled and dismayed, and as he looked out of the window he was seeing again the white, faintly smiling face on the cushion; he was hearing the low, serene voice of James Ferriss' daughter.

"Death is always at one's elbow, isn't it?" she had said. "Why scramble now just because it appears in a more definite form? And what is there to fear? I was not consulted about being born. I was started out imperfect. Deity would not expect perfect results. I have just done the best I could. I have succeeded in some ways and failed in others and stumbled along somehow through a handicap. And now why whimper? You are a gentleman and you see my limitations and my faults

and you are a friend in spite of them. You do not punish me for them. And Deity would not be less than a gentleman, would he?

"We are born with defects. You were born with just so much will power to overcome or hold in check those defects. I was born with just so much. If you have more, why should you deserve credit? If I have less, how is that my fault? If Deity made imperfection, isn't that his problem, instead of ours? If he permitted Satan to mar his work, is not that, too, his problem? and does not that pre-suppose a higher power than God?

"I have not known happiness. My father was good, but his life was all wrong. My mother was narrow and very selfish. She is dead, but that does not change the harm she did. My girlhood was darkened by their misery. Later came trouble still deeper, and pain and poverty. You have to know trouble, and pain, and poverty, and live with them month after month, to understand. No one else does. Those things meant wakeful nights and I had time to think. I am not bitter, but I call things by their own names and see them as they are. And I know that I have endured a great deal and have been fairly patient, and I cannot see in the least why I should now grovel and implore a mediator to intercede for me because I am not better than I am.

"Instead of apologising to the Power that put me here, I sometimes feel that that Power should apologise to me. I am here, a pawn in a game that I cannot see, very tired, not well, and heckled by worry. If I endure it and manage to be courteous to my fellowmen till the end of the game releases me, I really think I will have done rather well.

"There are many lives much harder and more cruel

than mine, and there are many, like your own, for instance, that run tranquilly and quite pleasantly from the cradle to the grave. Life is not just, and there is no guarantee that there is a justice after life that will repay. You think there will be, but you do not know, any more than I do. We do not know if our climb will reach a goal or just tumble us over into the dark. And either way, why should we be afraid? We have each of us 'some strange, dim dream of God.' And mine is not a God of malice. I am not going to crawl to him, because neither my sense of justice nor my sense of dignity will permit. And I am not afraid of him. If there is a Judgment bar, I am quite willing to hand over my little record, with blots and blunders, just as it stands. But I am certainly not going to cry about it.

"As for death—if it means justice we need not fear. And if it means just the tumble into the dark—well, that is peace!——"

She smiled, but there was the wistful timbre of a great pity in her voice.

"Life, when all is said, is the dance of the marionettes, isn't it? The weak dance to the tune of the strong, greed to the tune of gold, dullness to the tune of intelligence. And all to the tune of the Unseen." She looked at him amusedly a moment. "And yet you 'grave and reverend seigneurs' assert that there is free-will!"

CHAPTER THIRTY-TWO

BOB says if you don't come over to the Inn to this pet dinner of his to-night, he won't have you for his next wife. So now! There will only be ten of us, and you know most of them—Frank and Fan Cummings, the Vances, Judge Steel and Marian Fleming, Dr. Orth and yourself. Bob paired you with the Æsculapius and he knows things, so you won't be bored, you snippy thing! And as he is to make Dad Ferriss all well again, you can just let your fussy old work go for one night and get back in civilisation for a change. I don't see why you need cut out old friends and old times just because you are smart enough to earn your own living. I would starve to death, and I admit it. But I approve of you, if you do know so much more than I do. So you can just let it go at that, and come on back with me to the Inn for a gossip before the others come out with Bob."

"Toots" Keith, known to the society journals as the pretty and vivacious wife of Senator Robert Keith, was out of breath with earnestness and indignation. She was perched like a brilliant butterfly on the couch, hurling wrathful arguments at her old school friend, which she sandwiched with adoring "Coo-oo-oos!" to June's baby, who was blowing rapturous bubbles on his rosebud lips and showing his appreciation of the sweet face that bent over him with vocal and physical enthusiasm. Arms and legs—one foot bare and therefore kissed frequently by Mrs. Keith—were waving joyously in the air, and the young gentleman gurgled and gooed mysterious confi-

dences and mutual jokes to the brown eyes that laughed down at him.

"I can't leave my son—he might have a pain in his tummy," objected June, busy at her drawing board.

"And sure it's me that takes care of thim same pains if he do!" put in Nora, who had returned and gathered the reins of the Ferriss *ménage* back into her jealous hands.

"Nora!—you treacherous old Irish party!" June exclaimed aggrievedly. "Positively, Toots, I don't even own my own baby any more. He simply fell into that Irish blarney of hers heels over head, and believes all she says."

"He knows his own Nora can raise him, that raised his mother, an' none betther, thin!" proclaimed Miss Casey with a toss of her head. And an ecstatic crow from young Master Ferriss left his reproachful parent in the hopeless minority.

And so it was that June Ferriss, in a long, straight gown of pale blue, and without jewel or ornament, stood by the open French window that evening, as her host brought to her a man whom he presented as "Dr. Orth."

"The doctor is to take you in, June. And consider her placarded in advance, doctor. She likes to find out what you believe, just to disagree with you. Don't commit yourself—keep her guessing. That's what I have to do, or she would have me so tangled up my party would disown me."

"Thanks for the warning, Senator!"

Their host was imperatively called by a laughing group just entering at the far end of the room, and June, half in the soft light of the Keiths' private parlour, half in the shadow of the summer night outside, bent her

head with a slight, grave smile to the man who stood beside her.

He was regarding her in silence—a silence coldly speculative, but incurious. He was only a little taller than herself, but he was a man who would be observed and commented upon, where men of more striking appearance would be passed by. His walk was deliberate, he rarely made a gesture when he spoke, and his voice, though it had an unusual depth and richness, was markedly unemotional. The vague chill of his reserve and aloofness kept people from him, as by an impalpable wall, and yet a definite and impelling personality held them in unprotesting subjection to his will.

Men of larger physique, of pronounced personality—men voluble of speech and accustomed to command—men of position and of affairs—came into his presence with audible assertiveness. But the still, level gaze from under moveless lids; the words, brief and cold; the face inscrutably indifferent, checked, baffled, and frequently angered them.

The man they saw was well-groomed, quietly attentive, low-voiced and courteously patient. But what they could not see, they felt—an intangible, brooding, dominating Power that closed as inexorably around them as though it were a visible hand of steel.

To this, the men who were his peers yielded, glad of a strength they could call upon, which they themselves could not match, but which they were big enough to recognise and to pay deference to.

And this June saw, with swift intuition, in the man who was looking at her in calm silence. And though several long moments had slipped their grains of sand through Time's hour-glass since he had been presented to

her, she realised, with an oddly pleasurable sense of its strangeness, that neither of them had spoken.

She was still leaning against the frame of the French window, where the vines that climbed around it rested on her hair. Her perfect quiet matched his own, and his speculative regard met a regard that rested upon him with a calm and unhurried appraisal, and that set aside, with a cool indifference that he recognised grimly as unique with himself, the need of speech.

"Dinner!—Dinner, good people! Come, June and Dr. Orth. That motor jaunt from the City always starves the pilgrims, so let us feed them before they become dangerous."

Mrs. Keith's gay treble rose over the laughter and wrangling, and young Mrs. Vance, slipping her hand into the arm offered by her host, also called over her shoulder as they fell in line behind "Mrs. Bob" and Mr. Cummings:

"*En avant,* June Ferriss! I don't know what she has told you, Doctor, but don't you believe her!"

"Malicious libel! But don't you care, June," Mr. Vance said sympathetically. "The drones always make a fuss and get jealous of hard-working bees like you and myself."

"Hard working!" cried his wife witheringly. "When that man used to come courting me, he drove Vixen—that blue ribbon cob—and that high dog-cart he had would take the corner on one wheel. Dash! Why, my breath used to be taken away, Charlie was that dashy. I was certain he would be president some day, and so I married him. And then I found out it was all Vixen! Charlie is president—of the polo club! And his ponies keep him president of that."

"I appeal to the court! Name your retainer, Judge!"

Marian Fleming laughed as Mr. Vance seated her and turned aggrievedly to Judge Steel.

"Serves you right, Charlie," she jeered. "I told you I had a lovely disposition and that Nell was catty, before you married her. But Nell made you think you were going to rebuild Rome, so you may just take your medicine."

"Oh, well, Charlie does architect awfully nice bank and library things, and all that," his wife admitted. "But one can't get excited about buildings all squashed up like bread-and-butter plates on edge, as we have them in this country. We wouldn't know we had any architecture if it were not for the post-cards. And when I see one of those high-coloured 'famous' buildings of ours, I always want to ask a policeman where it is."

"Well, we unexciting hard-workers manage to squeeze out a good many of those jingly gowns you have on, through those butter-plate buildings, anyhow," her husband reminded her. "You lovely ladies can do the glory act in our country. We don't aspire."

The chaffing swept around the table in the private dining-room, which was lighted very softly by shaded candles. The pretty, animated women in their glinting evening gowns, the shrewd men who were of the best American type, relaxing from the fierce tension of the City day to play "Jock—a boy" for an evening—the fragrance of flowers, the tender plaint of distant violins —all these made the hour and the scene replete with charm. June enjoyed it lazily. Her work no longer permitted the irregular hours that pleasuring entailed, and since the shift of scene had swung her away from its care-free thoughtlessness into the swift and bitter waters where Life ate through shale and rock and lowering canyon, the butterfly nonsense that had once whiled

away the days so delightfully no longer held her interest for long.

She was not a part of it any more. She had eaten of the pomegranate, and the veil of dreadful things had been lifted to her shrinking sight. To those who have had this vision, laughter never comes again with fulness from the heart.

But she let herself drift through its hour of play-time, sensing its incompleteness and not sorry for the stern demand of need, that numbed the questioning of mind and heart, that would bring the morrow's labour.

"So you toil—you are an artist, I understand?"

Her lazily smiling eyes lifted slowly to the unsmiling gaze that rested on her face.

"Dear me, no!" she protested drily. "I work—yes. I am a syndicate-sketchist!"

"But your pictures——?"

She lifted her white, unringed hands with a slight gesture of repudiation, then dropped them idly back on the mahogany.

"Pray do not confuse the syndicate grind with artistry, my dear Dr. Orth," she replied amusedly. "We are familiarly, if not poetically, known as 'hacks.' We work by the foot—so much measurement per week. If we start in with dreams they do not last long. Our only inspiration is the recurrent fact of the first of the month."

His silence was meditative, and she accepted it, as she accepted the man—"strange and peculiar"—beside her with distinctly growing interest. Between the courses her hands lay stilly on the table, except for one slender finger that gently smoothed the petal of a rose that lay beside her silver. She did not fidget with the wine-glasses nor in her chair, where she leaned back easily. Her silence, too, was meditative, but he was conscious

of a mind at work and that played around the grim barrier that his own had raised between itself and the world, with the swift, silent insistence of heat-lightning.

The instinct of a lifetime of habit rose in defence. The instinct of a long line of stern New England forbears turned a front of stone to this rebel mind that probed its traditions and overturned its gods. With those dead men and women of iron probity, "women should be silent in the churches." This had come down to the man sitting in the soft warmth of light and colour, a part of his blood and bone. Women were silent—in and out of the churches—which meant obedient to the established order of things.

The daughter of James Ferriss was anathema to every tenet that hedged the female of his people. Science had wrested from him some of the beliefs to which his fathers had bent the knee, and in these he yielded to his inexorable intelligence only because of the stern honesty that was also his by inheritance. But these concessions to modern research and his own developed brain he made as part of man's evolution. They had no kin with the ideas of this woman beside him, whose face dreamed palely in the dim light of the candles. She had forced her way through the safe hedge of prejudices that had held the women of his race to beaten paths, and she had climbed an unbroken way that led where it was wild and perilous; that endangered, and made her conspicuous.

And this disregard of the sanctity of long custom annoyed him, because it disturbed beliefs rooted deep in a past that had never questioned. Then he realised that, under cover of the light raillery of well-bred people, the rippling laughter and undertone of distant music, this annoyance was becoming a definite thing, that he re-

sented the more because the cause of it was, he knew, aware of it, and was making no effort to placate him.

He found that he was explaining to himself why he disapproved of her. In her silence he read tranquil but detached interest in his point of view. And for the first time in his life, for some inexplicable and astonishing reason, there seemed to be a call for its justification.

Again he felt rise within him the instinct of defence, and his face hardened. To women, as women, he paid but little attention. It was always something of an effort to lend himself to the light banalities that passed for conversation on those occasions when, as now, his world called him to take part in its social side. He was not a hermit by nature—he needed, and found, pleasure in the society of his kind. He enjoyed the nonsense when men of affairs relaxed and the women of his order made part of a charming picture.

But it was not always easy to keep pace with the froth of jest that scintillated and sparkled with the airy transcience of snow crystals in the sunlight. The burden of his own affairs dragged at him with a heavy hand, and very often a sense of sudden, extreme tiredness bore him down just when the gaiety of an evening was at its height.

And to-night he looked at the bright face of his hostess with a vague sense of irritation. Why had she arranged her people as she did? She was credited with tact, so essential in the social world in which she shone by right of birth and training. Why, then, had she not paired her school-mate with the Senator, for instance, who had known her as a child—instead of with him?

It was not that he was narrow—so he told himself. He was a man of the world and looked upon life with the wide regard of much and varied experience. But his

habitual reserve, that walled in his thought as the ivied wall hides the English home from prying eyes, shrank in strong distaste from the spirit that gave battle in the open for the sake of an idea, and that drew upon itself the condemnatory attention of the public.

While the idea itself might possibly have an element that would lend it extenuation, the price paid was too great and startling. *Noblesse oblige*—and a gentlewoman owed much to the unwritten laws that so jealously guarded her dignity and fair name.

Charlie Vance, on her left, had claimed June's attention and her head was slightly bent toward him as he told her of an accident to one of his polo ponies. Her face and attitude were gravely sympathetic, but the surgeon, who was now studying her with eyes coldly hostile, realised with a paradoxical feeling of satisfaction that the confidences were falling on unheeding ears. That play of heat lightning, silent, unseen—the flame-phantom of horizons dark with secrecy—was reaching around the mirth and animation of the dinner group, to him. And against his will, his hostility held its hand.

Mrs. Cummings, on his right, was appealing to him plaintively to support her in an argument she was having with Judge Steel. He turned to her obediently and joined in the banter that danced as lightly as thistledown back and forth across the round table. The question that had arisen was that of granting the franchise to women, and as those at the table were about equally divided in opinion, the arguments, though laughing, were more or less earnest.

Charlie Vance had torn his mind from his ponies to protest against the militant type as a desecration of all the accepted ideals of sweet womanhood. Mrs. Vance

could not see why she would not be just as sweet with her rights as she was deprived of them.

June was not taking part in the little war of words, and Dr. Orth at last turned to her. Their voices sank and they were unnoticed by the gay disputants.

"You are not interested in the franchise?" he asked.

"On the contrary—I am interested very much," she replied.

"But you do not approve the mad methods that obtain in England?"

"*Tout comprendre, c'est tout pardoner.* Is our approval or disapproval worth much unless we know? Have you lived among working women? Have you studied and liked and suffered with them? Do you know what the conditions are over there that have made women who are naturally refined and reserved and gentle into the fanatics they seem to be?"

"I do not think any knowledge along those lines could enlist my sympathies for pyromaniacs," he said coldly.

"And yet—you are a physician!" June said gently.

"What has that to do with it?" he asked.

"I would say that it had a great deal to do with it!" Her voice was quite tranquil and her gaze did not lift from the rose that the one finger was again caressing gently. "Your profession knows by observation what we women who work know by experience. You know that there is a limit to endurance. That limit is rebellion, or madness, or death. Those starved pack-mules of England that we call women have endured. Some have endured in silence, some have prayed, some have cursed. They have bred little, tender girl-children and watched them pass from starved girlhood into pack-mule womanhood. They have watched some of them die and some of them go bad. And the iron of their own suffering has

corroded in their breasts as they looked upon corpse and prostitute—things that were once their own little babies."

"That sort of thing is all newspaper stories."

June lifted her eyes from the rose to the slate-grey eyes of chill unbelief, and as gaze met gaze, antagonistic wills crossed swords. Then she answered, her voice as quietly chill as his own:

"As it happens, the newspapers of England, like most of our own, dance to the tune of their masters. The pack-mules neither advertise nor own stock, my dear Dr. Orth."

A black-coated waiter leaned between them to fill their wine glasses. When he had passed on, Dr. Orth said with courteous irony:

"So you advocate burning historic buildings as a sign of emancipation?"

June turned her glass by its thin stem, watching the prismatic colours as the wine glowed richly in the light of the candles. When she spoke, the little chill that had hardened her voice had gone—it was low and steady, but it dragged tiredly.

"I understand burning historic buildings as a sign our own South was familiar with," she said. "The slave uprisings knew nothing of historic values, but they knew a good deal about girls sold on the block and seduced under the lash."

With a burst of laughter and jeering, chairs were pushed back from the table, and under cover of the noise Dr. Orth enquired:

"And the destruction of English property has accomplished how much, Miss Ferriss?"

As he drew her chair aside for her to pass in the wake of their hostess, June lifted her head and faced him.

"It has enabled me to draw the attention of an eminent

surgeon to a matter of world-wide importance, in which he hitherto had apparently no interest whatever. That is exactly what the pyromaniacs intended to do, Dr. Orth."

After cigars, when they rejoined the women, the men were informed that June was gone.

"You will have to play with a dummy," Mrs. Keith cried, busy with card tables. "June won't play cards any more and she only agreed to dinner. So she has gone home. It's a shame how she has renounced the world, the flesh and the devil, to say nothing of the rest of us!"

"Can't you convince her that it is necessary for her to frivol now and then, Doctor?" the senator asked. "'All work and no play,' you know!"

Cards were shuffled and play began, with a running fire of banter that kept the game from the absorption that so often turns game into gambling. Dr. Orth was a good partner and played scientifically. The disturbing element was gone, as he had wished. A woman who could condone any phase of arson was a dangerous woman, a type disturbing and objectionable. It was a good thing she was gone. She did not any longer "belong." These people were good-natured and broad-minded, but they respected laws and custom. Those who did not were a menace.

The world's conservative element had evolved certain barriers and restrictions that were required for general peace and protection. For a woman to set herself up as a critic of these tried and accepted barriers was presumption. For a woman to step from the modest retirement of her femininity into the limelight of her immediate world was worse.

The friends of James Ferriss and his daughter naturally defended her. But the women of Dr. Orth's family, had tragic circumstance touched them as it had

June, would have retired from the world and the world have known them no more.

June's undisturbed acceptance of motherhood, her quite sincere and equally complete indifference to the whispers of those who were her detractors, her frank delight in her handsome baby—all this meant nothing less than anarchistic war against all that was holy in tradition and precedent. She not only flatly declined the apologetic and crushed rôle that conservative Ferncliff considered the only possible attitude under the sad circumstances, but she lifted a level and quite pleasant stare of uncomprehension at the two or three well-meaning but distressed ladies who ventured to call at the bungalow, to kindly advise the equivalent of a nunnery. And the ladies retired in disorder.

And this Dr. Orth disapproved, as he disapproved anything in woman that failed of old and safe ideals. His own impregnable reserve, where his affairs and opinions were concerned, accentuated the disapproval. He believed in the "established order" for the general good, and that for it the individual should suffer. June Ferriss' iconoclastic overturning of this had the double offence in his eyes of iconoclasm and sex. She not only destroyed, but the destroyer was a woman.

"Doctor!—*Dr. Orth!*"

A shout of derisive laughter greeted Mrs. Keith's anguished cry, and Charlie Vance slapped his cards briskly on the table.

"You always will grab the doc for your partner, Toots, so take your medicine and look pleasant. *Aw*-fully obliged, Doc. *Dee*-lighted, I assure you!"

The surgeon, a wave of sudden and extreme annoyance sweeping over him, dragged the disciplined mind,

that had never before played him false, back from alien and rebellious places, to the quietly handsome modern drawing-room and its irreproachable occupants. On his face, usually inscrutably masked, disturbance was writ large, and little Mrs. Keith was partially comforted for her trumped ace. But her partner saw eyes that met his, calm, undisturbed, vaguely mocking, and with a warmth of anger as new as it was disturbing, he added his blunder to the already serious counts he had against her.

CHAPTER THIRTY-THREE

A WEEK later June stood at a window in Dr. Orth's private hospital, awaiting the verdict from the operating room. She had been waiting there a long time, but time seemed to stand still, and she was only conscious that every little while a sense of suffocation made her realise that she was holding her breath in an intense effort to hear some sound from that closed room down the hall.

Death was hovering close, she knew. She was risking everything on the one throw of the dice. James Ferriss would recover with every probability of his being as well mentally and physically as he had ever been—or he would not recover at all. Which way the scales would tilt was a gamble.

A very soft, mellow chime from an onyx clock over the fireplace floated on the stillness of the room, and she held her breath again as she counted the muffled blows of the hidden hammer. When they ceased, she leaned against the window frame with a feeling of sick fear passing through her. The operation was lasting a long time, longer than had been expected, and that was not a good sign.

James Ferriss was close to the edge of things—the tall, quiet man with the tender humorous eyes who had always laughed with and never at her, who had always "understood." He had been a tower of strength even in his invalidism. His mental activities had never been distorted nor weak. They seemed to be rather withheld, as though a hand had placed a dark shutter across the

lens, blotting out the world and its affairs. At intervals the mind thrust itself by this barrier, but impotently and wearily. And the effort was always followed by great exhaustion of the body.

Yet even in the fluctuating strength that necessitated his being shielded from the strain and confusion of active life, he was a power that guarded and turned from his daughter the more envenomed shafts of criticism and censure. He accepted the fact of her motherhood with the same loving gentleness with which his arms gathered to him the warm, sweet helplessness of the baby's little body. The thin, white hand with which he carefully touched the golden down on the baby's head, crowned it with the larger Fatherhood. The brand that the world in its appalling and oaf-like stupidity would have placed there was as abhorrent to him as the act of the Congo butchers who mutilated children. This senseless, illogical and astonishing brutality perpetrated in the name of morality and right—in the name of a Man who had blessed little children and had warned those who would harm them of a divine vengeance—always brought into the kind eyes of James Ferriss a glint of red fire.

"You will find your bastards in wedlock," he had told the Rev. Dr. Drake one evening, when that unhappy gentleman had blundered into an unctuous defence of the "established order." "If you brand, you excellent people, for God's sake be honest about it. If you must damn helpless infants in this world, as well as the next, go on and damn. But don't stop with the children of those who love. Damn the unclean fruitage of legalised infamy. And while you are about it, wouldn't it be a good idea for some of these busy people to get still more busy and find out just what kind of a child the God they are busy for wants them to damn? Would you mind

showing me in your Bible what ceremony makes a child legitimate? We have several hundred. The Baptist won't recognise Salt Lake, and the Catholic won't recognise the Baptist. A countrywoman of ours divorces a creature who outrages her womanhood in the name of husband, and she marries a man who worships her. Canada's law calls her a kept-woman. Well? Who is right? What child is illegitimate? Does your God marry souls or bodies? Does he want the children of passion in the highest, or the spawn of wedded lust? You say these laws are necessary for the controlling of the masses. Are they controlling them? And are the masses more important than the clean and complete living of my own and several million other souls? No, I am not advocating free love. But I advocate freedom to love, when love finds its own. I advocate laws that are not asinine—laws that will give freedom to two adult people who ask for it in the name of their own decency and self-respect. They won't now because they call it 'collusion'! By all the gods of common sense! And they won't now if the judge happens to have a bad digestion. In the name of all logic, will you tell me why any other man has the right to tell me a woman and myself must live together when neither of us wishes it? And when only one wants freedom, who has the right to quote 'law' to hold that one? Ask Carl Goethe what marriage discloses to many men and women. Ask him if a delicate woman, a self-respecting man, should be called upon to inform a gaping public *why* a release is wanted. Ask any physician to give you a few details, and then tell me what possible business it is of a legislature whether a marriage should be annulled or not. The idea is a vulgar and colossal impertinence. Protect the support of women and children by every law you can enact, but in the name

of physics and morality and clean living, stop making marriage a prison of souls and a brothel of bodies. Stop planting your great, stupid hoof on the thousands of helpless children who cannot defend themselves, and whose first lesson of 'humanity' is when you crush them for life, heart and soul, with your infamous and dastardly insult of 'bastardy.' That is a word that should be expurgated, that should be repudiated by every man and woman not in an asylum for idiots. That is a word the church has rolled on its cowardly tongue, that the law has used in its inquisition chambers, that society has glutted its salacious appetite on for centuries. Church, law and society!—to their everlasting and eternal shame be it said!"

The reverend gentleman who had bowed to the wrath that swept over all he represented like a prairie conflagration, remembered the sentiments of Mr. Ferriss when the day came that the latter's daughter faced the problem and stepped serenely over the pillory her world had prepared for her.

And on the narrow, exposed height on which she placed herself as by divine right, he and the sensible woman who bore his name ranged themselves beside her with a simple dignity that forbade protest.

Her other friends joined them, but June's calm gaze enforced the attitude of all. There was no question of "condoning." They were there because they defended, not the woman, but the fact itself.

But, comfortable as was the knowledge of "ain tried friends," it was the man whose blood flowed in her veins who meant refuge. Strong as she was in defence of that which her reason approved, the spirit would of necessity flag with the flagging body, and the hostility that reached her by many channels often bruised, as the

wayfarer through unfriendly roads is bruised by thrown pebbles that hurt, even though they do not swerve him from his course.

The very passion of her convictions that burned away the sophistries that satisfied the many, burned away also the placidities that buried the nerves under their comfortable layers of cotton. Her nerves were bare to the barbed arrows of misunderstanding and censure, even while she reared her head and faced them unflinchingly. Her sensibilities quivered like naked wires in winds that struck them like a rough hand.

She suffered, as those must who will deal in neither compromise nor concession for the sake of popularity. And because she suffered, so now she suffered in retrospect as she cowered against the window and realised that the endurance that had carried her so far owed much to the man battling with death in the operating room.

A tramp passed on the sidewalk, and her eyes followed him in bitter misery. He was unshaven, dirty, with a face showing the ravages of dissipation and disease. But he shuffled along in the sunlight, whistling in lazy enjoyment, and she saw in him life still burning strongly, while it flickered and failed in that room behind her, where white-robed, silent men and women nursed and fed it with every delicate method known to a great and wonderful science.

It seemed such a blunder, this survival of the unfit. The ragged, unbathed derelict slouching in the street, a thing of the gutter, an ulcer on the fair face of Nature, was there with years yet, perhaps, before him in which to breed his physically and morally tainted kind. And the high-bred, cameo-pure face on the little, flat pillow might in another hour be covered with the white napkin that

shields from curious day the austere calm of the dead!

The pity of it—the fearful, fearful pity of it—wrenched at the girl's heart in an agony of protest and pain. She lifted her clenched hands at the retreating form of the tramp, as though she could strike him down for daring to live while great lives passed out from a world that needed them so terribly.

Then the hands swept back against the window to support her, as she wheeled at the sound of a step on the threshold.

It was the surgeon, Dr. Orth, and he dropped his hand on her shoulder, giving it a sharp shake.

"It is all right. Don't look like that! And don't faint. This is no time for that sort of thing. Do you hear!"

There was a roaring of many waters in her ears, but the words and tone stabbed pitilessly to her consciousness and she fought desperately for strength and speech.

It was all right! He would live, then. He was not dead, and it was this man, with his cold eyes and speech, who stood in impatient patience before her, who was giving James Ferriss back to his daughter and his world.

She stretched out groping hands toward him, then drew them back. The anguish of long waiting had filmed her eyes and painted black circles around them, but in them was the look that comes in a dog's eyes when it gives fealty, and they met the cold regard with humbleness.

The sound of the operating table being wheeled down the hall to the patient's room reached them, and June started forward, but paused at the surgeon's side and bending down, touched her lips to his sleeve.

Then he heard the swish of her garments in the hall, followed by the soft closing of a door.

CHAPTER THIRTY-FOUR

SAY, 'Aunt Kate'," said Dr. Stanley.

"A' Cake," said Peter obediently.

"It isn't cake! It's 'Kate'," the doctor corrected indignantly.

"Cake," agreed Peter, with a joyous gurgle.

"Now, see here, Peter Pan, I absolutely refuse to be known as 'Cake' any longer! In your bright lexicon of youth you manage to get around the letter 't' quite glibly when it suits you, and there is no use pretending inability. Do you get me?"

Peter Pan rolled happily over on the fur rug and came to a stop wrong end up. Dr. Stanley spanked the pink chambray seat invitingly presented, and Peter crowed ecstatically.

"Your child doesn't even know chastisement when he gets it," commented the doctor with disgust. "If he didn't have Carl Goethe and me to Montessori him occasionally, I shudder to think what the result would be."

"But Montessori doesn't chastise, does she?" murmured June, regarding her board with one eye closed. "Up-end him again, Katrinka, till I get that left leg."

The doctor gathered a handful of pink chambray seat and elevated it several inches. The fat, bare knees promptly drew under, turtle-fashion, and June's brush worked busily.

Holding the restless little body firmly, the doctor scrutinised Mr. Ferriss, who was in a big chair by the casement window.

"Well, get it over," she told him resignedly. "I haven't

been here since yesterday morning, so get the latest out of your system. The condition of mind—the maudlin condition of mind—of the relatives and friends of this quite ordinary infant, is a pitiable spectacle. But never mind me! We are born to trouble as the sparks fly upward. What did he do and say?"

She reversed ends of the infant in question, and as it landed on its sandalled feet, it whooped gleefully and launched head on into her lap. She was sitting on the fur rug, and at the sudden onslaught she moaned pathetically, but consented to being half strangled, while her immaculately arranged hair was demolished and a wet, pink mouth planted fervent kisses in her left eye.

Mr. Ferriss smiled appreciatively and winked at his daughter.

"If he's too obstreperous, Kate, turn him over to Nora," he suggested innocently, and was rewarded by a wrathful glare from the one eye still serviceable.

"If you will please tell me what this child has been doing since I saw him last, I will be grateful, James Ferriss," she replied crushingly, but a little indistinctly, owing to a head of yellow curls now burrowing against her mouth.

"Well, you know Mocky came out last night after the performance, to have a few hours' visit to-day. Of course it was the sma' hours when she got here, and she dropped her wraps, gloves, and a two-pound box of candied fruit on the couch in this room, then slept in the bedroom with June. This morning while Nora was getting breakfast, Peter was paddling around in his pyjamas, and for a wonder seemed fairly quiet. But when the girls and I got up, Nora mysteriously signalled us to look in here. We did. Peter was quiet, as I said——"

"He was also busy," added Peter's mother.

"He was very busy," agreed Mr. Ferriss gravely. "He was leaning on his stomach against the couch, and he had the lid off the box of confections. He had about finished sampling the entire two pounds, which he did by the satisfactory method of putting a piece in his mouth and then taking it out again. The fruit was of different colours and the melted sugar and—er—spit, had run the colourings into an interesting Cubist effect, as they all stuck loyally together."

"Peter had the box all to himself," his mother explained. "He offered it to each of us in turn, but there were 'no takers,' as the boys express it."

Dr. Stanley rolled the small culprit over in her lap, then bent and kissed the nape of his warm, satiny neck.

"Foxy Pete!" she commented admiringly. "You are cut out to be a politician of a high order, that is evident. You know how to be generous with sugar plums, but taking care to first lick the sugar! Bright boy, Peter Pan!"

She burrowed into the sweet warmth of the baby's neck, then sat up and turned to June.

"How goes the work?" she asked.

"The new series is not hard," June replied. "The infant is a splendid model for Dan Cupid and it is a good field that won't be exhausted in a hurry, so I do not have to worry over ideas. They come without coaxing, praise be! And, Kate!—Dr. Orth brought a lot of German material back with him, which he wants translated and put in form for the printers. I am to do it for him. Isn't that an assignment worth having?"

"Going to make night work of it?" the doctor enquired without enthusiasm.

"No, I'm not—that is, only part of evenings when I

am in the mood, you mentholated shower-bath, you!" laughed June. "It will be different from my own work, and I always like the languages, so I will enjoy the translating. He is making annotations from his own experiences, and they are so remarkable, and yet so lucid, it is all wonderfully interesting."

"Well, yes, I can see that it might be," conceded the doctor. "But you watch her, Dad Ferriss! Union hours, you know. If you can't manage her, send for me, or for Carl. And when Dr. Orth gets through nailing little tobacco tags on your dome of thought, you and I will take that young woman in hand and tell her things."

Mr. Ferriss laughed and touched the bandage around his head carefully.

"He is a marvellous plumber, our Dr. Orth," he said, smiling, but in his voice a vibrant note that paid tribute to a great man. "And he promises that in a few months I may get back into harness. June won't tell me anything about business affairs, and he backs her up, so I am forced to be a lotus-eater. But all that is going to be changed one of these days! What a splendid type Orth is, Kate! Goethe has simply canonised him, and I am beginning to understand why."

"He is the salt of the earth," Dr. Stanley said with conviction. "He is a 'man's man' and men either rank him close to the pope, or are afraid of him. And I question if His Eminence has the devotion for himself individually that John Orth attracts! It is not an aura of Papal power. It is just the man."

June, bending over her drawing-board, listened to the eulogies of the man whom she owed so much. The delicate and extremely dangerous operation had readjusted the little dark shutter, and James Ferris had regained fully the cool and analytic judgment that had steered

him through the shifting sands and treacherous quagmires of the law so successfully.

Splendidly strong, they called Dr. Orth, this silent man of science, who belonged to his world yet held himself so aloof from it. Splendidly strong, always. But was he as splendidly right—always?

To the strength, that held its perfect poise through duel after duel with Death, June paid tribute in immeasurable gratitude. But the very gratitude that drew her thought so persistently to the man who inspired it, probed beyond the scientific attributes to the hidden soul of the man himself.

Was he merely an intricate and splendid machine, gifted with an almost superhuman power, as well as with a form of magnetic attraction for others that he neither heeded nor valued? Did the mask of unsmiling indifference not mask, after all, but really mirror a real indifference to everything but the recurrent gambling, with Life and Death as the stakes?

Men and women there were, she knew, of this peculiar type—"faultily faultless, icily null"—caring nothing for their kind, interested in abstractions only, and critically fastidious as to the niceties of life, while temperamentally utterly incapable of understanding the volcanic passions that sometimes broke bonds and made war with the pretty formal gardens and plaster conventions that adorned Life's surface.

Between her and the drawing-board the greyly inscrutable face floated. Did it mask—or mirror?

CHAPTER THIRTY-FIVE

DR. ORTH was watching his patient closely, not certain if a minor should follow the major operation. Meantime the two men became friends, and while Mr. Ferriss, under orders, kept much in the quiet and privacy of his own pleasant room, with its wide South windows, his physician relieved the tedium and found agreeable relaxation for himself by an informal "smoker" every day or so, at which matters of the outside and active world were discussed.

June, at her translations where the shaded light fell on her desk, listened to the low, full tones of the surgeon's voice, keenly sensitive to its rare charm. Its modulations seemed to change almost imperceptibly and very slightly, yet slight as was the change, its disapproval or displeasure cut like whips. There was no appeal to its glacial finality! She had seen those who met its pitiless decree shrink to hopeless dumbness, the eager plea or protest on their lips shrivelled like leaves blighted by the black frost.

She had studied his face curiously as he observed eyes suddenly averted to conceal stinging tears, heads turned away because of the shamed red that rose under the flick of his deliberately placed lash. And in his face she saw no faintest sign of regret nor even concern.

Those who loved him did so wholly and blindly. When they saw—if they did not experience, or experienced rarely—the fine cruelty so quietly expressed, they hastened to explain it away, to blot it out of their own consciousness with the uncomfortable sensation of hav-

ing been false to an ideal. They felt much as devotees who burn candles to the patron saint they worship, when the petition fails of a reply after all.

The good saint was probably intent on other business, thinking of other things, while the little candles sputtered and burned out! One must not criticise a saint!

And infallible as the saint to many, was the man in the next room whom June listened to curiously one evening, waiting till the "smoker" was over and he would pause to glance over and discuss her translating before going home. She could see, and in a degree understand, that blind devotion. It was complex in its sum total of causes, yet they all contributed to its dogged loyalty.

There was hero-worship, such as a grimly silent Napoleon would inspire in his awed followers, who would follow quite obediently over a precipice, did he direct. There was the reliance and sense of safety in the quiet tyranny that bade them go, or stay, because for the one master is born the thousand who are happier mastered. There was the bewildered but content yielding to the magic of a voice unquestionably beautiful, and the equally bewildered submission to that indefinable something that fascinated, as the Piper of Hamelin fascinated and drew after him the children, uncomprehending but glad.

Infallible to many—but a study to the woman who watched him curiously as he came into the living-room and drew a chair up beside the desk. With his customary taciturnity he drew the loose sheets toward him and studied them closely. With corresponding taciturnity she made no comment, but leaned back in her chair and studied the reader.

The soft light streamed over a head well shaped, and

features cut on clear but decided and almost straight lines. The brows were level and stern; the nose straight; the mouth finely chiselled, but with the upper lip set firmly on the lower, compressing it into a line of uncompromising inflexibility.

When John Orth smiled, the slight out-thrust of the lower lip and the knife-stroke lines that ploughed deep from nostril to mouth, changed in an unexpected and amazingly transforming manner. It was as though a spirit that had strayed, had returned to warm and animate its forsaken habitation. Of this phenomenon, a patient had once said wistfully: "If he only knew how he looked when he smiled, don't you think he would smile oftener?"

"I wonder if he would!" June murmured.

She watched the eyes deliberately travel up till they reached her own—watched with curiosity the still eyelids and the peculiarly deep but baffling gaze that lasted while she could have counted many seconds.

"Would what?"

The words were curt, the hard quality that the rich voice possessed was very evident, and June's eyebrows lifted.

"Smile," she explained pleasantly. "A patient said you might now and then, if you knew how much better you—how reviving it was to people."

"How much better I would look, you meant to say?" he enquired.

June's shoulders now lifted in a little protesting shrug.

"If you insist——!"

No shadow of expression indicated either offence or amusement, and she mentally raised hands of appeal to her gods.

"Why?" She just breathed the word, watching him closely, and he answered, as curtly as before:

"Why should I?"

June's pencil absently traced a butterfly on the drawing-board, then she tapped it thoughtfully.

"Why? Are not butterflies as neccessary, after all, as bees? Does not the world need the comfort of beauty, as well as the hive and its store?"

"Does it? I seem to get along without butterflies. There is not much room for beauty in a day of mine. I am rather busy generally, and do not see much to smile at," he said.

"That is true, of course." She was still looking at the butterfly, touching its wings with delicate strokes. "You are a wonderful surgeon of bodies, but, you see, your power does not stop there. You reach the heart, and you are able to heal—or hurt."

There was a moment's silence, then she looked at him.

"I question if you care very much," she said slowly. "But you influence people a good deal and the body is not all, any more than the hive. The butterfly was Psyche, you remember—the soul. And if you can make a soul that is sad lift its wings, does not that mean as much as restoring a limb?"

"That is not my profession," he said coldly.

"It is your privilege," she corrected steadily.

Their looks crossed—challenged. Hers neither faltered nor sank, and it met his with a serene scrutiny that was quite patient and mildly entertained.

"I am not a philanthropist, Miss Ferris. I leave that to people fitted to it, and with more time than I have."

"Is humanity a vocation?" She questioned with entire courtesy, but she still watched him intently. "I am not active in good works myself, but I notice the little things

that make up one's day—the fall of a pebble in a pool and its ever-widening circle of influence on others. The philanthropy you repudiate is the little pebble, the word spoken or withheld, the tone that helps, or harms. Each of us centres his own sphere. With some, the sphere is small and not important. With you, it is very large. It is so large that I am wondering if, after all, your surgery is the greater part of you!"

"It is sufficient."

She shook her head thoughtfully.

"No—I am not sure that it is!"

Her gaze went back to the pencil and absently followed its mechanical touches on the delicate wings.

"Our scale of values is open to question, isn't it? We want to bind your brow with bay leaves when you perform one of your wonderful operations on a human body. We almost deify you because you set death back a few days or years. We make life the one desired thing, the saviour of a life a hero. There is no question of whether the life is a useful, or even a happy, one. It is just—life!"

With light, sure strokes she sketched in the fine antennæ and was silent a moment, then she sighed a little impatiently.

"You set death back a few years, in many cases, just to prolong the grey existence of a grey toiler, who neither gives much to the world, nor gets much out of it. And we give you our plaudits. But we do not notice, and you do not heed, the lives your life touches each day, just in passing. They are so many—nurses, patients, friends, business people, strangers——. They come within your orbit and you give a direction, make a request, solve a perplexity, lighten an anxiety. Dull eyes brighten, anxious faces clear, bewildered souls become

animated with new ambition. I have watched it. It is wizardry, this peculiar ability of yours to infuse new life—not just the surgical trick of prolonged physical action—but life, as life is surely meant to be, with every faculty alert and eager and brave to do things and endure things with fortitude."

The pencil dropped from her fingers and she turned and faced him.

"That, to me, means so much—that psychological talent that you value so little and use so little. The souls that you touch unconsciously—you help them, and that vibration of new hope, new courage, of gladness—it pulses from that soul to the next that it meets, and from that to another, on and on through trackless ether and with incalculable influence. Life is easier, fuller, brighter, suddenly, just because you have made it so. While on the other hand——"

She stopped abruptly, and the man listening, after a long moment's wait, prompted with dry politeness: "And on the other hand?"

"You ask?" She spoke with deliberation, and he repeated, with cold gravity:

"I ask."

She lifted her head a little, then turned, with one arm on the back of her chair, the other on the desk, the hand unconsciously clenched.

"Then—on the other hand is your indifference to this, the more important of the two talents. When it is used and helps, it must be unconsciously, because so often you hurt—wantonly."

Attentive but unmoved, he considered what she had said in silence, then replied:

"I do not garnish what I have to say with bromidial

platitudes. They are not as important as you would make them."

June's eyes narrowed as they searched the face in the half-shadow, but its grey quiet baffled.

"It is rather a far cry from bromidial platitudes to your naked truths. And their effect is important. What is mere living worth? Is it not just a burden, unless there is some incentive, some hope, some happiness to make it bearable? If you give one human being a new chance to live, that is well. But with that one you can give ten the chance to live happier, and that is better. Say that you just brighten the day—that gives new courage, a new grip, to battle with the days to come. No one knows but the one you help. There is no glory in it. But it is worth while!"

He gathered the loose sheets of copy into a neat pile, with the careful precision that marked all that he did, and rose to his feet. With his soft hat held in one hand with the manuscript, he stood with the other arm stretched out, braced against the frame of the door and looked down at her.

Did he understand, or care? Was it a waste of time to yield to the impulse, half eagerness, half irritation, that this man always roused in her to protest against the Sphinx-calm that thrust back from him the lives that reached to him so instinctively, and so often to their own hurt!

She was conscious of a mental bracing to meet and withstand that chill, impalpable barrier that threw its shadow across the resentment that burned in her heart. With sensibilities exquisitely acute, she felt the pained shrinking of those whom his coldness hurt, and her sense of justice rose in quick and hot defence. That paradoxical quality so marked in him, that allured as a

friendly hand held out to a timid animal, and then rebuffed, stung her into ever new anger at its unfairness.

Try as she would not to care, she did care. And because her mental poise was, in general, not easily disturbed, the fact that this man did disturb it annoyed her very much. Her reason told her that if he declined to use his talent for the good it could do, that was distinctly his affair. Why interfere?

But her memory rolled up a brief for those whom his curtness had checked and bewildered, and the safe non-interference policy of diplomacy shrivelled in the fire of her indignation.

The talent wasted in a world that cried for its comfort and helpfulness so woefully, she could not see with the shrug of indifference of the wise. June Ferriss was not wise, perhaps. But the wise do not stumble on through black and bitter wastes toward distant beacon fires, that the unwise occasionally actually reach. So perhaps it is as well for the rest of us, cannily content with the near and safe make-shift, that we have those who are a little mad, as Dr. Stanley had said, and who dare,—to blaze a way for us.

So she leaned forward, as he stood looking down at her, the long silence broken only by the slow tick of the tall clock she had listened to as a baby.

"It is—worth while!" she repeated at last insistently. He still did not answer for a little, then he said quietly:

"Perhaps——"

His hand dropped to the handle of the door, and, turning it, he drew the door open and passed out into the night.

CHAPTER THIRTY-SIX

A LITTLE encampment nestled, toy-fashion, on the silence-steeped banks of the river Nile. The tents gleamed as whitely as a lady's handkerchief in the wonderful moonlight that spread in an unearthly radiance over the placid breast of the great river, the slender palms delicately piercing the sky-line, the arid earth lying lifelessly under the pallid light.

Before the group of tents a small camp-fire burned redly, and a man sitting in a folding canvas chair was smoking and staring into the flames that swayed calmly in the still air.

The man was dressed in white duck and a white helmet lay on a bench near him. His face was tanned to almost Hindu blackness by the hot sun and his teeth flashed with odd distinctness when he spoke, at intervals, to some white-draped native servants flitting about behind him.

A small, practically designed yacht was anchored close by, its unadorned utility softened a little by the magic of the moonlight which was flooding the scene with a supernal splendour. Farther down the river, native craft drifted languorously, and occasionally a long, weird cry of a boatman stole across the white stillness and died plaintively away in the distance, that presently sent back, very faintly, the answering, echo-like cry of a brother boatman.

The man smoking by the fire at last turned and asked a question in the native tongue of the servants, who had grouped together just beyond the tents, talking excitedly.

"Travellers approach, master," they answered in the vernacular. "Listen!"

A river cry was faltering to stillness and the man rose to his feet and waited. Soon he was able to discern a fine, thin sound, plaintively sweet and irregular—the sound of little bells, stealing weakly across great wastes.

"A caravan!"

The exclamation was muttered thickly and the sudden eagerness that flamed in his eyes accentuated the hollow shadows that heart and soul hunger had painted around them. It was the loneliness of the Caucasian among an alien people—of a master-mind seeking and planning, painting dreams through silent, strange days and nights, that were to turn the arid sands and wastes into fair garden places for a generation yet to come.

The generation would not know of him, nor care, but the creative "urge" in the man drove him on, away from his kind, into unspeakable loneliness, to do battle with heat and dust and thirst and the vague dangers that lurked always in the shadows that dogged his wanderings.

Across the dreary monotony of it, the sound he was now listening to sometimes came, its faint, indefinite notes a veritable hymning of hope. For the camel bells meant those from the active, noisy world he had renounced for his quest—those with news, at least, and possibly those of his own colour and race.

So he strained his hearing, with a fierce impatience sending the blood pounding thickly through his temples, while the tintinnabulation of the little bells swelled into jubilant distinctness, and, at last, six high, ungainly shapes swept up into sight and moved toward him across the sand-billows with incredible swiftness.

Excited questions from his servants greeted the camel-

riders, and they ran forward in welcome as the animals, uttering strange, harsh cries, came to a halt and went down clumsily on their knees.

It was a caravan of native merchants, the man watching eagerly saw, but a sudden shout burst from his lips and he leaped forward as a helmeted figure climbed stiffly down from the saddle-pad and stood rubbing his limbs and swearing fervently.

"Carson—by all the gods!"

The helmeted gentleman limped forward and grasped the outstretched hands in an iron grip.

"I'm discovered," he admitted. "That's me. Say, Mendoza, how many thousand more miles does this bailiwick of yours extend to? Got anything to drink? Never mind water—hate to waste it. Other things will do. Where's the bar?"

Mendoza was wringing his hands and swallowing hard, while Carson submitted to the torture and grinned foolishly.

"Why, you dissipated old reprobate!" Mendoza was exclaiming joyously. "You old Wall Street highbinder, you! Have you turned missionary or jumped your bail? What did it, old man?"

"Just so," Carson replied calmly. "That was it. Missionary. Want to let some of these coloured gent friends of yours over here in on the ground floor on some good things. Just like finding the money. See? Gilt-edge security. Yep. But I don't like your taxi-service. Look nice in those ten-thousand-dollar oils we buy in London, but they don't do a thing to your joints. I'm no acrobat! Where's that bar?"

The bar and a camp-fire dinner soon reconciled Mr. Carson to a more appreciative view of Egypt and the

upper Nile, and he filled his pipe and leaned back in his canvas chair with a sigh of satisfaction.

"Nothing small about that Luna party you have out here," he remarked, gazing at the great silver sphere hung in a limpid, fathomless vault of cloudless ether. "Some moon, that. We ought to have it at Coney. It would double the Iron Steamboat crowds, believe me! What you going to raise out here, Gray? Corn? Alfalfa? No Evergreen Glades about this Garden of Allah, is there! You certainly have the nerve of the devil to tackle this benighted sand-bar and stake off pasture lots. All I can see that raises well around here are lizards and brunette gentlemen in bath-robes."

Mendoza laughed as he pressed the tobacco down in the bowl of his pipe.

"Never mind, Charlie, I'll give you first option when the orange groves and berry patches get started."

Carson cast a quizzical eye at the surrounding scenery, then stared at the group of desert merchants sitting and lying on sand-carpets while they talked in low voices and smoked the long-stemmed pipes of the desert.

"Queer old ginks! Lord, I'd fall over my petticoats and break all the commandments if I had to wear all those sheets around me. Do they ever get a shampoo or a bath? Looks like one of Belasco's stage sets, doesn't it? And, say! this bally noiselessness gets on my nerves! Doesn't anything ever make a sound out here? Where're the frogs or trolley cars or Victrolas or something? I'll take some more of the bar, old man. This is all so damn spooky, I need a tonic!"

A native placed the "bar" on a stand comfortingly close to the visitor's elbow, and he braced his suffering nerves generously, then grinned affectionately at his host, who grinned affectionately back.

"It would be me for the dippy-*maison* if I had a month of this. How on earth do you stand it, Mendoza? This committing suicide for the sake of future generations listens like a Victoria cross, of course, but Sainted Susie!—the heroic makes you miss all the good Broadway shows and my digestion won't stand this Boy Scout cooking as a steady diet. Don't you long for home and Uncle Sammy sometimes?"

Mendoza's teeth closed hard on the amber between them and he leaned over with his elbows on his knees, looking into the fire from narrowed eyelids.

"Yes, it is not lively," he replied quietly. "But that is part of the game. I suppose it is just that, and the obstacles that I have to fight, that keep me fighting. If we can't get what we want in life, the next best thing is to fight for something that we don't want, perhaps, very much, but that keeps us busy."

"Er—yes—maybe——" Carson looked dubiously around him. Land and sky, sleeping Nile and sleeping natives, seemed to have slept for centuries. There was something brooding, sinister, in the vast, passionless calm that looked with august toleration down on the little lives and little interests of Man.

"But I don't know, after all, that I should want Egypt and irrigated vegetables for its descendants as an antidote. I don't get all I want—no one does—but I can go down town and forget it. It takes too long to get down town here to suit me. And I would rather let Egypt go on getting her vegetables canned from New Jersey. Gimme some poker chips and a chance to sit in a quiet little game with the boys, and I'll chuck the Victoria medal stunts. Better cut it, and come back with me. What is it that Omar chap says? 'The bird of Time has but a little way to flutter—and the bird is on the

Wing!' Let the dagoes go on living on camel steaks and fried cacti, and come back to Forty-second Street. When you're dead, you're very, very dead, remember. What's the use!"

His host listened attentively while the voluble visitor detailed the gossip over-seas. Married, moved, dead or just quietly sunk out of sight and forgotten by most —the chatty narrative glanced from name to name, from anecdote to anecdote, while Mondoza put in a question or comment here and there.

The great crystal globe that seemed so close to them, moved majestically toward the Western horizon, but still the old friends sat and talked, pausing now and then to replenish the fire or pipe. And at last Carson spoke of the preceding summer.

"Went to Ferncliff nights when the City got hot—put up at the Inn. Lot of the old crowd there. Toots and Bob go there a good deal now and so do the Vances. Toots is quite dippy over June Ferriss' boy—they have no children, you know, and are crazy for them, of course! So Toots takes the boy motoring with her and——"

The pleasant, gossipy voice fell into sudden horrified silence. He had forgotten! Mendoza had dropped his chin on his hands and the light in the pipe between his teeth went out. His eyes were staring fixedly at the fire, and he seemed quietly attentive. But the muscles of his darkly tanned face were twitching jerkily and the arteries on his forehead had risen in knotted cords.

After awhile he leaned over to tap the ashes from the bowl of his pipe and spoke with careful steadiness.

"Miss Ferriss has a child, you say?"

"Yes—I forgot you had been out of the world for

some time. Good Lord! And you didn't hear, of course——" Carson stammered uncomfortably.

Mendoza very deliberately refilled and lighted his pipe.

The few palm trees that were etched blackly against the horizon, were as immovable in the still air as though carved in ebony. The silver smoke of the little fire rose in a straight, slender column toward the sky. The haunting cry of the boatmen had sunk into silence and the great crystal globe, low on the edge of the world, burned now with an ochre fire.

Carson rose with a long and very audible yawn. "Not that I love thee less, old man,—but I love my little tent in the wilderness more at this hour of the night. Or rather morning! I have talked myself hoarse, like a perfect gentleman, to be obliging to a benighted expatriate, and now I'm going to say my 'Now-I-lay-me' and turn in. 'Night!"

Mendoza rose to pilot his sleepy guest to his tent, then returned to his chair by the fire. The ochre sphere dropped down beyond the edge of the world. After awhile a phantom finger traced a pale line between the purple velvet sky and rolling sea of sand shrouded in dark mystery. Then the pale line slowly widened across the East. The camels stirred uneasily and one, and then another, painfully struggled up from calloused knees to their feet, their little bells rolling petulantly.

The phantom hand now swept hurriedly across the wide dome that arched like an inverted bowl over the desert, and the edge of a molten copper disk appeared out of the far sea of sand.

The native servants wakened and knelt, with brows touching, upon their prayer-rugs, and with faces turned to the East. Mendoza had not moved, and his body-servant went to him and spoke. He was staring into

the ashes of the little fire, but raised his head and answered the servant gently. In his eyes was a terrible hunger—the hunger that breaks the hearts of even strong men.

CHAPTER THIRTY-SEVEN

THE night the camel-riders slept and Graydon Mendoza watched the dying fire, while he and his soul went down into the depths where old sins rise up and strike with a bitterness worse than the bitterness of death —on this night June Ferriss, on the other side of the world, also watched.

Sleep had passed her by, so she had at last slipped from her bed, twisted a long, dark cloak around her, and settled herself on the steps leading to the garden to watch the always new wonder of dawn coming over the world.

The soft, multitudinous whirr of garden voices, the brave little chirp of crickets, the fairy castanets of tree insects,—all the tender, sleepy sounds of the night where trees whisper and dew-wet earth and grasses give fragrant breath, rose around her.

The great moon that had sent its flood of radiance down on the little cluster of tents in far Egypt a few hours before, now touched the tops of thick clustering trees with silver and shone palely, but distantly, down on the humid sweetness of the garden.

And where the man fought the bitter fight with memory, where he sat by the wise, silent river, and felt the intolerable ache of homesickness that had been his portion as slow months lengthened into years, the woman on the little wooden steps of her home felt, too, the *heimweh* of the soul, the spirit's homesickness in the wilderness.

She was holding together the little home for her nestlings—her child and her father—the mother-woman

of her faithful to its instinct to guard and nourish. But the tax upon her body that frequently, as to-night, would not let her sleep, weakened the will that held sternly to the patient round of the day's demands, and out of her weakness the spirit pressed forward crying imperatively for its other self,—for the pillar upon which to lean, for the voice whose language was that which only her own soul spoke and understood.

The day had caught her up into a gay party of old friends at the Inn, and she had cast aside harness for an afternoon and evening of frivolling, which friends and physicians insisted upon as necessary for health's sake. And she had earnestly tried to enter into the spirit of grown-up play that her good sense told her was Nature's antidote for labour.

But the play she found only to be play-acting, after all, and she realised with growing satiety as the hours passed, that these laughing idlers to whom she had once belonged, with their superficial brilliancy of clothes and speech, were dancing along a path to which she could never again return.

They belonged to the surface of things; but she, the pomegranate aloes-sweet on her lips, had penetrated the Earth's hidden darknesses, had climbed down Tartarean steps to where naked souls lifted writhing arms of pain and toil and fearful sorrow.

And the shallow interests with which these laughing and care-free fortunates filled their days, amused for a little, but not for long. The Vagabonds made merry, but their foolery was the garland of field flowers that draped the ox-yoke of labour. Through their nonsense ran the undertone of achievement, of things striven for, of failures that refused to see defeat, of successes wrested stubbornly from the "horny hands of Fate."

Of all this the idlers knew nothing, and June realised that their ways would never again be her ways, nor their gods her gods.

And so in the soft darkness of the garden she weighed and laid aside the days that wore the trappings of a Columbine and of a Harlequin, just as before them she had laid aside the toys and trinkets of the little girl. She had gone immeasurably far beyond them, and she looked back at the Garden of Delight with its butterfly throng, with a very human sense of loneliness. They now called her, but when she did not return they would very soon forget. That she knew.

And now she must turn her face to the things that were different and the ways that were her own. They were ways rugged and stern, and they called to the fighting blood in her that always stirred and responded. But her intelligence cried for a Cause, her justice cried for a recompense.

For what was she fighting? To what would the long effort lead?

Just back of the line of trees were great factories where little children toiled. For these children she was now working with her daintily sharp sketches. The world was very busy and very heedless. It would not read pleas nor prayers. But it would glance at pictures —pictures that caught its eye and appealed with beauty or satire or sting.

So very deftly, very carefully, she was leading that clumsy, easily alarmed mastodon, the Public, step by step along a series of Dan Cupid pictures that should lead into the child industries.

It was a dangerous thing to do. She was interfering with the "established order," and that great, unseen

Power behind it that manipulated men and wires and affairs was a very terrible Power.

The Press was behind her so far, and it sometimes, here and there, would give strength to the weak. But the Power was stronger than the Press and in the end it generally mastered.

A rising wind swayed the trees and rushed through them with the sound of surf on the beach. June lifted her face to it eagerly as it whipped her loose hair across her eyes and lips.

The night with its innumerable voices seemed to draw close to her with a mysterious and tender intimacy, and the strain of the day that fretted, yielded gratefully to the cool, healing shadows.

The eternal wonder of the sea of stars—signs pricked by the stylus of unseen gods—drew her gaze with the awed fascination that had questioned when she was a child. Then she had questioned the mystery of their world-old beauty. Now the groping soul wistfully sought the meaning written in silver across the world's darkness.

She had passed through the slow disillusioning of life's little vanities, and she relinquished them now without regret for their loss. But her spirit shrank from the void they left, as one shrinks from the echoing emptiness of a dismantled house. She could tire her body with days crowded and exacting, but the mind often refused the sleep that was labour's due. And when it did, the echoing of the empty house reached her heart with a physical hurt.

Somewhere in that dark dome that arched over her, the lode-star shone in the "innumerable company of stars." She had followed its cold and high command through ways dark and terrible. Its ice-flame had burned through

the comfortable trappings of expediency, and she pressed close at the price of scars—at the price of poverty, of crime against the law, of slander, of loneliness.

There was no glory of heroic deeds. There were mistakes and blunders, there were stumblings of unwisdom and weaknesses that marked the spirit's "dead low tide." And these her wakeful nights always laid before her with care—the jetsam of broken and troubled years.

But yet, though she had stumbled again and again to her knees, she had always somehow struggled up again and gone on, holding to the fitful gleam that only said "Perhaps!"

CHAPTER THIRTY-EIGHT

AND so it was, over a month later, June Ferriss again crept from the house where her father and child slept, to the steps leading to the garden. Through the sound of soft night voices she heard, without heeding, the distant noise of a train that stopped and then went on again. And then, after awhile, of a step coming along the road. This she did not heed till it paused at her gate.

Then she turned and peered curiously through the shadows of the trees at the man who came steadily up the little earthen path and who paused, with head uncovered, before her.

"It is—you!"

She just breathed the words in utter amaze.

Graydon Mendoza stood in front of her, but not the man she had known. The darkly tanned face was thin and haggard, and he had aged by many years. He stood hesitatingly for a moment, then lifted his head and drew a sharp, difficult breath.

"I have been out of civilisation for two years. Carson was my guest—a month ago. He told me of you, and of—the boy. And so—I am here."

When he ceased speaking the multitudinous, peaceful voices of the night closed around them again, and the soft *"hush—hush!"* of the trees whispered mysteriously. The woman sitting on the steps did not move from where she leaned against the rustic post, holding the soft, dark cloak around her, and the man, uncovered, stood silently in the dim light of the stars, and waited.

After what seemed a very long time, June Ferriss slowly rose to her feet. Mendoza's hands tightened suddenly on the soft hat he held in them but he did not offer to assist her.

With her draperies gathered around her, June paused a moment, looking at him inscrutably, then she made a little gesture toward the steps. Obediently, he stepped forward and seated himself, as she turned and softly entered the house.

Action, thought,—the world and the stars stood still for the man who lifted his face to the skies. In the silence of the garden he waited, as he waited in Egypt, for the night to pass.

At the soft rustle of garments, Mendoza rose to his feet and stood at attention. The door of the house was opened and June came out of the darkness, into the starlight. In her arms she held the sleeping child, the night breeze playing across his flushed face and lifting the golden, roughened curls.

Holding the sweet, heavy burden against her breast, she looked into the man's strained eyes with grave gentleness. The soft hat was on the path at his feet, the arms were straight at his sides with the fists clenched, and though he stood rigidly erect, she could see that he was shaking as a strong tower shakes in the grip of the earthquake.

Shifting the limp body of the baby, she leaned forward and laid it in Mendoza's arms, that mechanically met and closed around it.

CHAPTER THIRTY-NINE

OF course, the whole situation is—impossible——!" Dr. Stanley was sitting on the corner of the big desk where June Ferriss worked. Mr. Ferriss was in his arm-chair by the window. The sunshine streamed through the vines that climbed riotously over the windows and around the doorway, and the leaves flickered and danced gaily in a capricious little breeze.

Dr. Kate traced one sunbeam that quivered on the floor, with the toe of her very smart shoe, and puckered her eyebrows perplexedly.

"When you marry him and go back to Egypt, people will sit up again and ask questions. It will be the usual nine-days wonder. But that will be the end of it. It is all impossible—but events crowd fast, nowadays, and all life is in the melting-pot. So nothing nor nobody attracts attention that matters much any more. There is not time to study any one picture on the film. The Great Movie keeps right on a-goin'! I suppose," she added reflectively, "the best way to do would be to be married at once, so Gray can get back to those wonderful ditches he is planning and leave Jimmy Ferriss in our care. We will look after him—Carl and Dr. Orth and I!"

June leaned back and studied her sketch critically a moment, then said, as she had said once before: "But I am not going to marry him, you see!"

During a long pause of absolutely stunned silence, Dr. Stanley stared at the toe of her immaculate shoe.

Then she pulled herself together with an evident effort and turned slightly to face the artist.

"You are not going to marry him," she repeated in a monotone, and June shook her head.

"No."

There was a little flicker of emotion, of relief, in the finely carved face of the man at the window, but his gaze remained dreamily on the garden and its depth of greenness.

"If I—would it—would you very much mind if I enquired why?"

Dr. Stanley's voice was very carefully polite, but there was evidence of strong internal agitation.

"Why?—Why should I?"

Dr. Stanley lowered her two correct shoes to the floor and she walked over to the door and back. Pausing at the desk, she looked at the serene worker while impotent exasperation scintillated around her.

"Because it would establish your boy."

June laid down her pencil with a slight but patient sigh.

"My dear Katrinka," she said quietly. "Your suppressed emotions are emitting sparks like a Marconi tower. This situation can be held to a sane recognition of facts, or it can topple over into absurdity. I intend to hold it to facts. You are talking about a position in the established order. You must first show why and where the established order should command my attention. I am not interested in it, you see."

"But for the boy's sake——!"

June looked at her frankly and steadily, then leaned forward on her elbows, her loosely clasped hands resting on the sloping board.

"My dear," she said. "I am not stupid, of course. I

understand that you would like me to marry, and that would be a comfortable settlement of the matter for all concerned. Only, you see, you evade the main issue, you ignore the personal equation. I am the one who would marry. I do not wish to. You say 'for the boy's sake.' I say that no boy that I would respect would respect his mother for entering into an unlovely alliance because the established order considered it expedient. I have an idea that my boy will think as I do. His name now is James Ferriss. If he would rather have a different name, that I would have to buy for him at the price of my own dignity and self-respect, he would not be my boy. We would be strangers and I would despise him.

"I am not going to marry Mendoza. I am not going to marry any man unless I want to. I am not going to let any combination of circumstances close around me and drive me into 'holy matrimony' that would be an offence to every instinct of my body and my spirit. The world is on the other side of my gate. I do not seek it. It is a great, big, groping, astigmatic enigma. I am sorry for it, but I do not revere it, nor fear it. You people who understand my point of view, come to me and I give you myself as I am. The others, who neither understand nor approve, are privileged to remain away, and they do not interest me. Within my own four walls are my work, and my books, and my friends. That means peace. And I will not permit a world's cowardly compromise, that stains my womanhood, to destroy that peace."

The doctor lifted her hands in resigned surrender.

"It is for you to choose, of course! The other way seemed the lesser of the two evils. It would be the easier way. You have a long road yet to go and it is going to be a hard one. You will be misunderstood, maligned,

and all that you are now battling for will be used against you, to defame you. George Eliot was reviled and Ellen Key is slandered. It is the price they pay for daring to think. The mob does not think. It herds together and plunges ahead, and the dust it raises is so thick it couldn't see clearly if it had intelligence to see with, which it hasn't. When you step out of the herd because you have personal scruples against the deeds that the dust-cloud obscures, you make yourself a target. The Sebastian rôle is not a comfortable one. I may despise the mob, but I would rather drift along with it than be a pin-cushion for their arrows. What's the use?"

June's eyebrows lifted. "But I wouldn't, you see," she explained, adding placidly—"and I don't believe you."

"Oh, you don't?" Dr. Stanley glared at her a moment. "Well, I'm talking sense, anyhow, though it is possible that I wouldn't exhibit any more than you do, if I got my back up. You have a mulish streak in you that will help a lot—so had Sebastian, and that is why he took his arrows and didn't whimper. But you won't always have Dad Ferriss, and the coming years will shift your friends East and West. And then——?"

CHAPTER FORTY

AND then?" June smiled. "Why then—we will still be good friends, my soul and I. I will not be afraid to be alone with it. In the final analysis, that is the real thing, isn't it? There is a great, confused world of humans out there. Are they happy? Do they know—peace?"

She looked up at the other steadily.

"They are not happy, and you know that they scramble, buffet, clutch and fight in a mad, breathless climb. They want more money, more society, more clothes, more power, more display. They want—and want—and want. They are never satisfied. There is always a higher rung of the ladder. They want till they die. Well? If they do not gain, they are soured and bitter. If they do, with that sort of want, possession means satiety. They are chasing rainbows. Can they give me anything? I have 'my ain four walls'—my fire, my books, my pictures. They all look at me with friendly eyes. They never fail me, nor hurt me. My work gives me sustenance. 'Peace after pain, calm after stormie seas, doth greatlie please.' That is my life. The arrows have to stop at the four walls. And—we are good friends, my soul and I!"

With a shrug of her shoulders, the doctor put her fists into her coat pockets and paced up and down the room meditatively. Going over to the back of her father's chair, June smoothed his thick grey hair with her finger tips and kissed the top of his head.

"It is the better part, isn't it, Jimmy Ferriss?"

He looked up at her gravely, and in his eyes was a light, very deep and very tender.

"It is the better part, girl," he answered.

And so Mendoza went back to his world of past centuries, but in place of the old, gnawing pain there was something of content—there was something to live for.

The boy was to be shared with him. As soon as he was old enough, he would spend half of his time with Mendoza. And Mendoza now faced the heroic problems of the desert with a mighty purpose warming and vitalising his heart. He had a boy to live and work for, to dream and succeed for. The horror of loneliness in that arid, illimitable sea of sand—the ghosts that reproached and the spectres that jibbered—these at last would be laid. Over the desert an oasis spread and in the night shone a star.

Meanwhile, June Ferriss had the bewildered and despairing protests of her closest friends to meet. The Rev. and Mrs. Drake in particular were sincerely shocked and deeply troubled at this last, and, to them, now inexplicable mutiny.

Her former genuine liking for Graydon Mendoza was given as an unanswerable argument for a sensible compromise now, and her gentle but firm refusal to consider a marriage so advisable from every possible point of view, brought Mrs. Drake to actual tears.

Unshaken in her resolve as she remained, June was worried by the pressure brought to bear against her decision, and when the final arguments had been advanced and advocated and at last silenced, the inevitable reaction left her exhausted and with her nerves tingling.

The cool darkness of the garden called her, and in its quiet she strove to overcome the peculiar, internal

tremor that causes such indescribable, yet such acute suffering, to those with over-strained and sick nerves.

This condition she dreaded particularly because it weakened the stern philosophy that held her life to its course, and it let loose the dread depression, latent but unsleeping, that rolled its bitter waters over the little structure of peace her will builded and guarded so jealously.

After the birth of "Peter Pan" the old injury in her side did not cause steady suffering, as formerly. But protracted work or duress stirred the little devils of pain to activity again, and to-night her lips were pressed together in a straight line, and her eyes were encircled with bistre shadows as she crouched on the steps and gave battle to the world that thrust its strength against her portals.

She had held to her resolution, but she was alone, and she cried out for the solace of her old gods—the gods that had nothing to do with the world's ways. Close as were those who believed in her and loved her, yet in the crucial moments they, too, were ranged against her in the short-sightedness of the affection they bore her, which sought to safeguard with concessions.

For James Ferriss, still in his prime, esteemed and loved, life still held much and it was only a matter of time till he would rebuild over the wreckage of his first marriage. The child gripped her with his baby fingers, her heart answering to his helplessness with a yearning, protective tenderness.

But for the woman of her, life had yet given nothing. As daughter and mother a profound affection found expression; but a something deeper and greater struggled for utterance, and struggled against locked lips. Already threads of silver were thickening in the soft

dark hair at her temples. The sonorous diapason of Life had steadied, but had saddened her. The repression of the patient lips had intensified the baffled longing for speech, and to the night and its mystery her soul went out in bitter loneliness and questioning.

"To care—to the very core of my soul!" Her eyes sought the great canopy of stars. "If you would just give me that! To live to the full extent of one's being! To feel, in every nerve and fibre and vein! Not to pretend, not to make the best of lesser things, but to care with brain and body and spirit! It would explain, and repay—it would be an earnest of what might sometime reward. To care, as I could care! If you would give me that, just once—even if with a price——!"

Out of the vast night the spirits of all the past centuries seemed to be thronging around her, crowding close while the rustle of their unseen garments blended with the rustle of the night wind through the trees. They, too, had striven and hoped, had suffered and loved. Some had loved greatly, many unworthily, more still had played at love or sold it in the market place. They seemed trying to tell her and to be sorrowful because she could not understand. But through their confused, silent clamouring, the voices that had come to her across the wide, dark waters, came to her now over the sleeping hills—pagan, perhaps, but high and clear and stern.

And her beaten will slowly gathered back its strength to endure, to go on.

CHAPTER FORTY-ONE

THE paintings are wonderful—not to know them is to argue yourself unknown! So you will please powder your nose and come on!"

Even so had "Mrs. Bob" declared herself, when she had returned Peter Pan to his home after a glorious day over hill and dale. The paintings were those of a famous artist and were on view at the Inn, so Mrs. Keith had invited herself to dinner with June with the avowed intention of taking her hostess afterward to see the wonderful canvases.

And June Ferriss, impatient of the savourless, flat days that seemed to drag reluctantly, consented to be taken away from harness for an hour's relaxation.

As Mrs. Keith stopped her car before the broad steps that led to the long, lighted veranda of the Inn, she and June were gaily hailed by a waiting group, who piloted them down the corridor to the ball-room, where the pictures were on view.

People in evening dress were gathered in front of each painting, or sauntering from scene to scene, and the hum of voices blended cheerfully with the music of stringed instruments that came from the gallery. June's friends joined in the animated discussions of colour and perspective and technique, appealing to her for confirmation or support, and she strove earnestly to rouse herself to like interest and enthusiasm. It was not easy—the long strain of effort and contest had sapped the springs of earlier enthusiasm in art, as in life, and even while she responded to the comment and good-natured banter that

played around her, she was conscious of an inner disinterest that made the response hollow in her own ears.

The senator, Judge Steele and the Cummings were amiably wrangling over the respective merits of old and new schools, and she knew herself to be answering absent-mindedly while her gaze wandered over the room.

As the groups dissolved and changed, a sort of lane opened before the high throne-chair in which she had seated herself. Diagonally across the room a little cluster of men stood before a sea-view, and among them she saw Dr. Orth. His back was toward her as he faced the painting, listening to a man beside him who was talking with much animation and frequent gestures. Fully half the length of the ball-room was between them, but June felt herself grow suddenly tense with interest. She had not seen the surgeon for nearly two weeks, and it now came over her suddenly and strangely that she had missed him, that she had needed him, and that now she wanted him—that she wanted him imperatively.

Her easy, half-languid attitude did not change, her lips smiled and answered obediently the whimsical appeals of the disputants around her, her eyes seemed looking with lazy amusement on the bright and laughing throngs.

But through the music and the murmur of well-bred voices, a cry went from her soul to the soul of the man on the far side of the crowded room—*"John Orth! John Orth!——"*

The throngs were but a bright-hued phantasmagoria; the voices, with her own among them, were unreal and mechanical. Nothing was real but the need that leaped to life with blinding suddenness as her slow-moving gaze reached the quiet figure of one man in that far group.

Instant, unthinking, the cry that had waited long be-

hind locked lips made its appeal. And so urgent was it, she felt only a desperate impatience, unsurprised, as the man turned on his heel and came straight across the room to her chair.

She watched him from under lowered lids as he reached her side and paused, acknowledging with his usual quiet courtesy the little chorus of salutations that greeted him. She, herself, did not join in them. That call, that seemed to hold in it all the tense waiting of her whole life, shook her being to its very centre. The vast combination of causes had evolved this moment, slowly, inevitably, as grind the mills of the gods, and when the moment came, her soul had thrust back and down the last barrier that stood in the way and had cried out desperately to its recognised desire.

And as though the cry had been audible across worlds, he turned in immediate answer and now stood closely beside the great carved chair. June's heart was beating thickly, but she smiled up at Judge Steele as he told her of his first purchase of an "old master" that proved to be very new. Her brain grasped all that was said around her with wonderful clearness and she knew that she was playing her part easily and naturally. But while her faculties answered obediently to the stern demand of her will, her soul was in a tempest of confused exultation.

"John Orth! John Orth——!" The cry was beating tumultuously through heart and brain. Out of what centuries of weary longing had it burst at last, unerring as a sword of white flame that touched her mind, and then his, as with a divine fire! Repartee and soft laughter rose and fell around them, the music swayed and lilted over the harmonious confusion, people came and went, and June's group, some sitting, some standing, changed and shifted. But the quiet figure remained, leaning easily

against the back of the throne-chair, while golden minutes paced by and her heart sang to the magic of their sweetness.

There were no scales nor foot-rule. Her bewildered senses knew nothing of analysis. She was conscious only that something supernaturally wonderful had occurred in that brilliant ball-room crowded with people of the polite world. They did not know. But over their tropical colour and splendour her dazzled eyes had seen the silver ray of a star that pointed to infinite things—a silver shaft that pierced to her heart with a pain that was exquisitely poignant and sweet.

Slowly the wild beating of her pulses steadied and her voice sounded more natural in her own ears. She was keenly conscious of the coat-sleeve near her shoulder —of the quiet hand with its sensitive surgeon fingers that rested on the broad curved arm of her chair. She was leaning on the other arm, away from him, and giving her attention to the senator who had dragged forward a teakwood tabouret for a seat. But her lips were unsteady and her eyes aglow, for a magician-touch had transformed the great room and its beauty was not now artificial, its music and laughter no longer mocked.

Out of vagrant and formless inharmonies a master-hand had struck one full, supremely perfect chord that flooded her whole life with its meaning, as the grey of hills and valleys is swept with warmth and life and the music of birds at sunrise. Harmony, light, colour—all these meant life, and all these life had lacked till this man turned on his heel in answer to that sudden cry, and faced her.

"What are you saying to her, Bob?" Charlie Vance demanded. "As Opie Read puts it, 'Her eyes are a'singin' of a tune!' What sweet nothings are you pouring into

her ear while your neglected wife hides her breaking heart afar off?"

The senator glanced back at a group of tub-palms, through which his wife could be seen instructing a very handsome youth in an intricate dance-step.

"I think Toots will live till morning," he reassured Mr. Vance. "I wish you would run away and play, Charlie. I am telling June things and we don't want to be interrupted."

"Speak for yourself!" replied Mr. Vance aggrievedly. "Her eyes started singin' when she saw me, anyhow—I don't think you had anything to do with it. A penny for your thoughts, June! Bob or me?"

"Neither," said Miss Ferriss cruelly. "I was thinking of Oliver Twist. Do you remember where he 'found life unfurnished'? I wonder how many there are in this crowd of politely smiling people who are paupers like Oliver!"

"Well, your eyes are smiling. How about it?"

Her lips smiled with her eyes, then she pursed their soft curves enigmatically.

"Dickens learned what hunger was before he was able to write that. We keep the shades drawn on our poverty, but we learn to value. I discovered to-night that the 'unfurnished life' is rich."

"In possibilities, you mean?" asked the senator.

"In actualities," June corrected. "Denial sharpens our understanding. Each bit that Oliver gains, after long waiting, is a marvellous thing. His is the discriminating joy of the *connoisseur*."

"While the golden spoon boy finds his furnished house has been done by the professional upholsterer!" agreed Senator Keith. "Life uses the birch freely, but after all there is a rough justice under her discipline."

"Takes a thundering lot of philosophy to find it sometimes, just the same!" objected Mr. Vance. "Anyhow, let us eat, drink and be merry! Come on, you folks. The ozone from those sea-scapes has given me a splendid appetite. Wonderful artist, that painter-man!"

CHAPTER FORTY-TWO

DR. ORTH was sitting at his desk in his study, a pile of the German translations before him. As he read each page with deliberation, he made notes on a pad and glanced at the desk clock.

It was almost time for his morning clinic at the hospital, but his days were always crowded and he made use of every spare ten minutes to work on the manuscript for his book.

The translations were accurate and intelligent, and as his pencil followed them with editorial touches and comments, he was conscious of a sense of *camaraderie*—of the spirit of the interested and sympathetic co-worker that breathed in the written words. To the man who had always worked alone, there was something oddly pleasant in this new, shared labour. The German word-sequence had been carefully adjusted by the translator and the subject-matter "Englished" in correct phrasing that did not offend eye nor ear, while the text had been conscientiously preserved.

This appealed to him both as man and savant, and his first impulse of jealous reluctance to trust work of such importance to untested hands, yielded quickly to a very pleasant sense of a mind working quietly and interestedly in the shadow of his own.

The day before had been very trying. In the evening he had dropped in to see Mr. Ferriss, and as usual June had given him what manuscript was ready. She had noted the grey weariness of his face, as he sat down and unconsciously relaxed in the shadowy quiet of her work-

room. And after explaining one or two points, she asked abruptly: "Why don't you have some mercy on yourself?"

He did not reply at once, and her brows knitted as she looked at the lines and hollows that an invisible hand was moulding deep into his temples and beside the sternly set mouth.

"You know what all work and no play means," she insisted with distinct irritation. "No labour union would stand the hours you keep. You take an evening now and then for a game of cards, but what is that! How long is it since you had a vacation? I don't mean Germany. That was even worse harness than here. And you came back and pitched into accumulated work without a day's rest. Why don't you stop?"

"What difference does it make?"

The question was quiet, disinterested. In his eyes as he looked at her, she saw the flat weariness of long habit—the weariness that endures without protest and that disregards its own burden.

"Have you no ambition?"

"No."

A chill of helplessness closed around her heart at the curt finality of the monosyllable. Anger, protest, doggedness—these one could meet and combat. They were tangible and could be grasped with argument. But this undisturbed indifference, that accepted the years as it accepted the days with silent acquiescence,—what weapon but would glance from its wall of ice, futile as a child's little feathered arrow!

Her very impotence fanned her irritation into a flame of anger. She could not disturb the calm that mirrored the unfathomed depths of this man's mind. But she could attack the impossible, driven on as she was by

the sense of revolt that stabbed her into protest, as though with the barbed points of the matador.

"There is no question of duty—of obligation to others?"

He looked at her steadily, and she suddenly lifted her hand.

"Don't you see how you pervert duty!" she cried despairingly. "You are letting it bear you down—you are carrying the old Man of the Sea! You don't look at the larger duty, the greater things to be still accomplished. You are tired, through and through. You have neither rest nor play-time nor laughter. You have just work, and it is wearing you out. And you don't care! It isn't that you don't see—but that you don't want to see. You don't care——!"

The lead pencil had paused and remained idly on the paper at which the surgeon was looking intently as the desk clock ticked away the minutes. He was seeing the eyes, darkly angry, that arraigned him—he was hearing the voice that accused, and that played upon the cold immobility that encased his motives and acts as with whips. He, John Orth, surgeon of international repute, was brought to task in a little cabin that edged the mill district, by a woman whose views were diametrically opposed to his own; who was tearing down where he upheld; who was a menace to the established order that he held to be necessary and right.

"You do not want to see!—You do not care!"

The relentless lash had curled around him, while she forced him from his attitude of detachment and made him face the world as a whole and see Life as a broader thing than his wearied isolation had cared to admit.

Sternly and scrupulously honest as the stern Puritan

ancestors whose blood ran in his veins, John Orth accepted the arraignment with impartial consideration. He knew that he did not want to see, and to himself he admitted that he did not care. He was tired, and the poison of long labour unrelieved by counter-channels of interest that give the mind rest and renewed strength, was now evident.

Well, what matter! He was giving mind and body to his profession, and that was enough. The woman in the cabin saw in him qualities that might or might not be there—that might or might not influence others. But his life had left him incapable of added effort. He was doing enough.

As he bent over his work again, the door opened and Mrs. Orth entered. Her face had the unhealthy placidity of the habitual drug user, otherwise she was as neutral in appearance as in character. The surgeon did not lift his head as she took a seat beside the window and close to his desk, but as she drew a single hair from her head and proceeded to break it, piece by piece, with little snapping sounds, his lips tightened.

A second hair, and then a third, was treated in the same way, and at last the man straightened up suddenly and turned to her.

"Please do not do that!"

He spoke with careful courtesy, but his wife laughed defiantly.

"I guess it's mine!"

He looked at the roughened and badly arranged hair, with its broken ends in an untidy and lustreless halo around the sallow face. The yellow hands were again busy at their old maddening trick and he turned to his writing.

The little persistent "snip—snip" followed him, light-

ing on his train of thought like a gadfly. He stood it till he found that his thoughts were floundering and widely astray. Then he turned again and spoke:—"Would you mind sitting in the other room? I want to go on with my work and that noise disturbs me."

The unvarying courtesy of long and iron-willed years did not falter, but the short, defiant laugh once more answered him.

"Oh, I like it here. I don't think I'll change!"

The inscrutable eyes rested on her for a little, then he turned and methodically gathered the loose sheets into a neat pile and locked them in the desk.

"I am going to the hospital now. Where is Helen?"

His wife shrugged her shoulders.

"I don't know. You scolded her and she went out."

A vague look of trouble showed for a moment on his impassive face. A little earlier, he had reproved the child for a slight error. His strained nerves were beginning to tell on his habitual repression and his voice was perhaps colder and sterner than he realised. He remembered the startled lift of her head, the scarlet that had flamed suddenly across her face and then receded, leaving it wax-white.

And now he was uneasy. Had she taken the reproof more seriously than he had intended? She was acutely sensitive—a child that brooded silently but who was at the same time keenly observant.

"Tell her I want to see her after the clinic," he said. Then he took up his hat and slowly went out on the grounds that extended to those of the hospital.

A few days before he had met June Ferriss as he left the big building after the clinic, and they had walked down the road together while she laughingly wrangled with him over some nonsensical matter. As she nodded

and left him at the lane that led to her cabin, the child, Helen, had joined him. She waved her hand smilingly to Miss Ferriss, then slipped it through her father's arm and looked up into his face with his own inscrutable eyes.

"How happy you look, father!" she said with quaint wistfulness.

He had looked down into the delicate face of the little woman-child in silence. They did not need speech, those two! They were very close together in their silent way, and they understood each other very well. And now the wistful face was very clear and the wholly disproportionate flush of humiliation that had stained it that morning troubled him.

A shy boy had walked home from school the day before with her and had given her a rose. And he had told her she was too young for such attentions. He had only wanted to keep his child a child—but his voice was unconsciously stern, perhaps. June Ferriss had told him it was in very plain terms!

And—well, he would "make up" with his sensitive little daughter after clinic. They had "made up" before after little ripples that had marred their chumship once or twice. And he would explain to her that he only wanted to keep her to himself as long as he could. He did not want rivals yet!

She would understand, and the sensitive mouth would quiver into smiles again.

Then he turned as the gasping house-maid stumbled across the gravel path behind him and called.

He was "in time" as we express it. But is that of much avail, after all? Friends and physicians had advised his placing Mrs. Orth in a retreat, but he had

shrunk from what seemed his shirking a duty. It seemed too radical a step.

So the child, Helen, had grown familiar with the phases and symptoms of drug taking,—familiar with the ease with which forgetfulness could be attained. And when her sensitive modesty had recoiled and sunk under the sting of her father's reproof in an agony of abasement, the familiar thing was at her hand. It offered escape.

She was beyond speech when he got her in his arms, but her eyes reached his for just a moment before the heavy lids veiled them.

CHAPTER FORTY-THREE

FROM his Night in the Garden, the Christ went to a Calvary that led to the great peace of death. But from our Agony we are drawn back to life by a Lilliputian-horde of daily demands armed with whips. Our feet are placed on the treadmill, its creaking thrills through the silence that has stunned our ears, the noise and dust and outcry rise around us, and we blindly stumble on and up to meet the coming days and months and years.

We force food past our sick lips and we force tonics into our weakening systems, because the clamouring demands of the unsleeping practical things are requiring of us attention and effort.

And the world gives us its sympathy for a night and a day, and then forgets us.

After the child's death, John Orth returned to the daily routine of work. The grey, mask-like pallor of his face was a little more pronounced, but that was all. The hospital filled to its capacity and waiting patients boarded in the village at private homes and the Inn. The mill district called on the noted man and he answered to those calls that meant charity as conscientiously as to the others that meant cheques.

Occasionally in the shabby houses near the mills he met June Ferriss. The mill children had taken the law into their own hands and visited the cabin as usual. And the over-worked and excitable mothers were not only glad to have them go, but, with the easy adaptability of their class, calmly ignored their lapse into "benefits for-

got" and called upon the mistress of the cabin for advice and assistance as freely as ever. She did not believe in o'er much flannels and jellies, it is true. She probed home mercilessly through laziness and shiftlessness. She found lighter work in the village for the anemic weaklings who were unable to work in the mill, and to the men who shirked their burdens onto the shoulders of wives and children, while they themselves loafed and smoked on the street corners, she showed no quarter.

She good-naturedly jeered and bullied them first, winning a good percentage back into something like thrift by fanning expertly the little flame of shame they smothered by indolence. Those less easy to influence she whipped into line through various channels by which she could direct discomfort and pressure. And the wives, tired by labour and too much child-bearing, who were prone to slip into slatternly ways, she alternately coaxed and scolded into something like neatness and pride.

The surgeon's occasional quiet visits with Mr. Ferriss continued and one night, six weeks after the Orth tragedy, when he paused by the shaded lamp for the copy June was busy with, she rested her arms across the sheets and looked up at him.

"I have something to say to you. You are eating too little and you are working too much. You are ill. Dr. Goethe and Kate and the Drakes—they are all worried."

He stood passively beside her, his face like pale stone in the soft light, bistre streaks around his eyes and grooved deep into his cheeks. His eyes looked down into hers with the dull stare of dead eyes.

June's breath held suffocatingly in her throat and her fingers clenched, but her voice was as steady as one of his

own knives as it felt its way carefully between life and death.

"To have and to lose, where we have cared much, is a very piteous sorrow. It is one we all have to meet and bear, somehow. But you are letting it kill you. Is that as it should be?"

There was no shade of emotion in the face she watched, but after a pause he said, in the level tones that his tensely silent clinic auditors were familiar with: "Helen comes back to my wife and to her sister, Mrs. Bowen. They tell me how frequently they can feel her presence. Why doesn't she come to me?"

With a little choking cry of horrified unbelief, her hands closed tightly around his left hand where it rested inertly on the desk.

"How cruel—how unbelievably, hatefully cruel!" Her eyes blazed with anger at the deliberate malice that dropped acid on the open wound of this man's unsleeping remorse. Mrs. Bowen she had met—a very commonplace woman who had never liked her sister's husband—and she could see the two women, little souled as they were of narrow intelligence, playing upon the dumb suffering that laid a great mind at their mercy, and enjoying their power.

"Those women lied—lied!" Her low voice shook with its passion of indignation and the denial of this unspeakable thing leaped like flames from her eyes to the dead greyness of his.

"Helen worshipped you—there was nothing of another's blood in her. She was you—in flesh and brain and spirit. She misunderstood. But if death does anything, it explains! And if she could come to any one, she would come to you—you know that!—you *know!*"

Her fingers were vise-like on the wrist she held and

her voice ached with its agony of longing to undo this terrible wrong—to see in that stricken, death-calm face something of peace.

"My dear!—my dear!" she whispered pitifully. "Helen loved you, and if they feel our grief, those who have passed beyond the reach of grief itself, don't you see how it must be with her, to know that her rash act is keeping you on a torture wheel! Is it fair to her, not to let her make peace with you? For that is what you are doing! She misunderstood you—we so often misunderstand the one we love best. And all in a moment she did a tragic thing, not knowing how awful it was. And in the next moment the threshold was crossed and then she saw that it was a mistake. But she cannot speak to you with human lips and you will not listen to the spirit of her that does speak to you. You won't let her make peace. And you know—you know—that her love is crying to you to forgive her as she forgives you. You know that love does not weigh nor measure, it does not change nor resent. It mistakes, and it suffers; but it goes on loving, always and always, as you love Helen, as you know that she loves you——!"

Her uplifted eyes held his as she pleaded for the dead child, for the living man. Her voice hardly raised above the whisper, but he stood motionless, looking down at her, while the solemn ticking of the old clock swung slowly through the still room. For the first time he could see the child with wistfully pleased eyes, as they were that early spring day when she said, "How happy you look, father!" She had reflected his moods like a sensitive little barometer, and now——

"You will make your peace with her——?" June's eyes were holding him, pleading, compelling. "You will let your intelligence and your heart speak? You will

not yield to a morbid superstition—a sick imagination? You will be your own strong self, worthy of the heart of gold that loved you—that still loves you——! Helen loves you, John Orth!"

Her voice broke, and where the flame of anger had been in the eyes raised to his, he saw the slow tears come.

He did not speak, but the hand she held turned, and the fingers closed around her wrist. And after a long pause she whispered, with a little sobbing breath: *"John Orth! John Orth!"*

Then her head sank till her lips rested on his hand where it held hers, wrist against wrist. And when she raised her head she saw in his eyes the troubled pain that, after awhile, brings peace.

Slowly the clasped hands fell apart and in silence he turned and went out into the night.

Mr. Ferriss had slept and wakened, and saw the light still burning in the living room.

"Is all well, June child?" he called drowsily.

In the shadowy room June's eyes shone mistily. From where she sat at the desk she could look out of the casement window and see storm clouds, silver and black, and through a rift, the high, silver gleam of a star. And with her eyes on the star, she answered him softly: "All is well, Jimmy Ferriss!"

CHAPTER FORTY-FOUR

BLESS the changing seasons!" Dr. Kate Stanley remarked piously one evening, as she blithely opened the door of the cabin and knocked afterward. "That flicker of firelight through your leaded window, with the harvest moon just over your squatty roof, is a picture, Jimmy! I picked up Dr. Orth as I passed the hospital and brought him with me. Is that cider pickled or fermented or whatever it has to do to itself, June? Because 'the frost is on the pumpkin and the something's on the rye,' a night like this, and one should have cider and doughnuts to conform to the eternal fitness of things."

A shriek of joyous welcome heralded the approach of Peter Pan, and that gentleman precipitated himself upon each of the guests in turn. The surgeon stood him on his head, to his great glee, and then anxiously counted the small limbs that were waving wind-mill fashion in the air.

"I am sure you have more than the allotted number, Peter," he said gravely.

"Where? Where?—show me!" shouted Peter Pan delightedly.

"Your son's ambition seems to point to the rôle of star in a circus side-show," Dr. Stanley informed June as the latter came in with the doughnuts and cider, Nora following with glasses. "He seems distinctly disappointed because Dr. Orth can only find two arms and two legs on him, after all."

"Heaven forfend!—his boots cost more than mine now," laughed Peter's mother. "If he had any more

feet to keep shod and hands to get into mischief, I would leave him on your doorstep in a basket."

"Sure an' I found sivin dusty peraties in my flour bin this marnin' an' the bath-tub overflowin' into the hall this afternoon, and all moy kitchen knoives an' foorks sthandin' in the mud in the garden fer sojers whin I stharted to get dinner," added Nora. "It's the young terror he is, that bye!"

She scowled fiercely at Peter, who promptly hurtled over against her knees and demanded, "Cat's cradle."

"I have no toime fer foolishness," sternly exclaimed Miss Casey. "With me dishes waitin' to be washed an' me bread to set. Goan wid ye!"

She whirled out of the room indignantly with Peter Pan hilariously driving her by her apron-strings, and a few minutes later sounds indicating "Cat's cradle" issued cheerfully from the kitchen, while the dishes waited.

"Spoiled!—What's the use!" mourned Dr. Stanley.

"Quite spoiled," assented his mother calmly. "But his theological course of instruction has begun, so let us not lose hope."

"What denomination?" enquired Dr. Stanley with lively interest. "Peter as a theologian opens wondrous vistas! Does it point to the priesthood, do you think?"

"Very much so, from present indications. Miss Casey is tutoring him." June's eyes twinkled at the appreciative smiles of her auditors. "To-day I decided to paddle him after the bath-overflow, and took him into the dad's room to explain first that I was not angry, but the discipline was necessary."

"——Old 'hurts me worse than it hurts you' bromide!" commented Mr. Ferriss. "What did Peter say?"

"He sat on the side of the bed while I talked to him, and explained the damage to the house and the extra

work for Nora, and all that. And when I then explained that I felt that I must punish him, as it was my duty, he looked at me solemnly and said, 'But you will be wicked if you punish me, mother!' I was rather taken back, but enquired respectfully why I would be wicked, and was reproachfully informed that 'Jesus always forgave His enemies!'"

Delighted approval shone in the faces of her audience and Dr. Orth commended Nora. He laughed and said:

"Priesthood or law—Peter's masterly handling of a difficult situation that held painful possibilities indicates conclusively that anything less than cope or sheepskin would be unworthy his talents. Nora is all right, and trust Peter Pan to dodge unpleasantnesses!"

"But what about discipline!" protested June. "Of course I choked and fled to the garden. But I cannot let that round-eyed little imp wriggle out of his just deserts in that fashion. You people spoil him, and nobody will paddle him when he needs it. So I must do my best. But if he is going to quote scripture, what can I do? You can prove about anything you like by the prophets."

"Well, Peter had you this time, that is certain," laughed Dr. Stanley. "And I wouldn't worry about that young man's defections. He is going to be clever enough to get out of the consequences of them, which means that he will wax wealthy and famous and will some day donate a fountain to the future city of Ferncliff."

The two men smoked and talked comfortably in front of the flaming logs the cool evening gave an excuse for, while Dr. Stanley went off with June to superintend the putting to bed of young Ferriss.

"June Ferriss, I would like to shake that doctor man!"

said Dr. Stanley when they were in the bedroom. "He had been slaving in the laboratory where he had a cold lunch instead of going home to a hot dinner, and he looked like his own ghost when I met him coming out of the hospital. If he doesn't put that unfortunate woman in a retreat and get his own grip back, he is going to die, and soon. That is plain."

June bent low over the boy, while she unfastened buttons and buckles, and did not reply. The doctor wandered over to the dressing table where she paused and stabbed a nail file viciously into the various articles scattered over it.

"You know this high altitude business is all right in books, but in real life it is rank nonsense. We are just every-day mortals and we have our common every-day work to do, and there is no use trying to make ourselves into angels at the present stage of the game. That Orth man hasn't any of the redeeming vices, and his virtues are the kind you die with. He is married to a vehicle that carries one hundred per cent of morphia-saturated flesh. There is neither brain nor spirit nor womanhood left, if there ever was any, which I doubt. And his narrow-visioned, pious, hide-bound ancestors are camping on his trail and are keeping him gagged and blind and chained to their horrible old beliefs, that were as cruel as the practices of Choctaw Indians!"

The nail file was pitched disgustedly back on its tray and the speaker began pacing up and down the room with her hands rammed into her coat pockets. June was sitting on the floor with her back to the light, while she removed sandals and socks, and her voice was uneven as she bent over a stubborn little buckle.

"What can we do? One may not say anything. It

would be execrable taste in the first place, and he would doubtless resent it as an impertinence in the second."

"Oh, sure!—sure, Mike!" The doctor's ill temper found voice in withering slang. "Of course it would be bad taste, and we are so scared to death we might fall foul of the latest thing in etiquette, we scurry to cover like rabbits. And we are so afraid that a mentally sick man might take umbrage at a friend's interference, we hug our knees and sigh like furnaces and watch him get ready to snuff out! We and our diffidence and our scariness make me sick! Our culture lets a man drown because we haven't been introduced, and the man's delicate sensibilities might be shocked. Oh, Lord!"

The child was stretched across his cot-bed crooning to himself drowsily, and his mother, still on the floor, chafed the soft little feet gently between her hands.

"We are cowards, Kate—that is what our good breeding brings us to!"

"Yes, non-interference is good taste—and safe!" replied the doctor with grim irony. "And meanwhile that man out there is headed for his final little 'Now-I-lay-me' because nobody has the nerve to tell him that, while he may be a wonder generally, one lobe of his brain is dippy."

"Dr. Goethe——?"

"Oh, Carl has done what he could, of course," said the doctor impatiently. "He wants him to go away for a month, and he has argufied all that he knows how. But it rolls off that sublime stoic like water off a duck's back. He isn't interested in his practice. Helen's death was a hideous shock, and now the long life of soul-starvation is getting in its final work. That worse than empty house with that ghastly creature mooning around snipping her hair, is too much for even his Puritan-granite constitu-

tion. And he only saves himself from growing completely dippy by not being interested in anything. And that is the sign-post to the crematorium."

Kneeling by the cot, June Ferriss drew the clothes over the boy, now fast asleep, and put her face down in the warm little neck. Iron fingers were clutched around her heart, and in the fragrant warmth of the child's shoulder she was battling desperately with the sick fear that sent picture after picture in lightning flashes through her mind.

It was a fear that kept with her daily, hourly, but to have it voiced so pitilessly by those around her in their all-unconscious cruelty, was torture. She had to school herself to just the expected degree of affectionate anxiety —no less, no more. And the effort, when the sick man was under discussion by his worried and devoted intimates, was sometimes almost beyond endurance.

Now she pulled herself heavily to her feet and turned a calm face to the physician's keen eyes.

"And you are no Phœbus, daughter of the Sun, yourself," was that lady's caustic comment. "You are working like a plough-horse and look fagged to death. I really cannot understand why perfectly inoffensive persons like myself must be afflicted by people we grow just enough interested in, to have them pester us into nervous prostration! I'd like to put you two into a crate and ship you to Hawaii for the good of my own health."

She led the way scowlingly back to the living room and crossly informed Mr. Ferriss that it was time he went to bed.

"Dr. Orth knows it is, and you have both talked long enough," she added as the patient sighed resignedly,

nodded to his physician with a whimsical wink, and retired to his own room.

"And I'm going to cut through the back yard to see a patient on the next street. Good-night, you two!"

She looked at Dr. Orth from under frowning brows, shook her head dubiously, then shrugged her shoulders and departed.

June was sitting on the arm of a big leather chair, leaning against its back with her chin resting on her clasped hands. She was staring into the fire, and the old clock ticked solemnly for some time while Dr. Orth smoked and the flames played in rose and purple plumes over the logs.

The first wind of fall was complaining around the casement windows and the seed-pods of the clustering vines thumped with firm little fingers against the pane. The room, with its low, open book-shelves, its pictures that had each a meaning, its soft gleam of brass and glow of crimson from clusters of bitter-sweet, was very restful in the subdued lamp and firelight. The aromatic breath of the pine logs blended pleasantly with the aroma of the cigar, and Dr. Orth's gaze followed the silver smoke as it drifted slowly away, to be drawn in nebulous ribbons up the chimney.

The long silences they both were given to, held the two now in quiet content while they watched the fire. The little noises of the night circled around them, holding them with the intimate charm of their mysterious whisperings. The world's need of small talk they did not need. They were looking into the wavering flames with thoughtful eyes, but their spirits were out on the shoulders of the wind, seeking beyond life the meaning of life, reaching to the worlds that swam as silver motes

across the firmament—trying to reconcile the immensity of things with their pain and pettiness.

Presently the whirring of wheels in the old clock was followed by the soft, throaty strokes of its gong, and as the echoes died away, the surgeon dropped his cigar into the fire and rose to his feet.

June lifted her head and faced him, the restful dreaming in her eyes driven out by the strained watching that shadowed them habitually.

"Carl Goethe says he wants you to go away for a month, and you won't. Why?"

She spoke quietly, but a little pulse at her throat fluttered.

He looked at her with the tiredly contemplative gaze that seemed to chill all argument and leave it trite and commonplace, and her interlaced fingers tightened as she steeled herself to resist its numbing influence.

"Why should I?"

The question was uninterested and she searched his face, grimly calm in the dim light, while she answered him.

"Why? Because if you are to go on living it will be necessary for you to go away—alone—to the coast, somewhere, anywhere, where it will be different, where you can forget this place, your work and your cares, and give yourself and Nature a chance to readjust. All life is out of tune with you. That is not normal, nor natural. Your people here need you. They trust you and they lean on you. Your life does not mean just yourself. It means countless other lives, and the lives they in turn influence. You are letting yourself go because of one duty that you use to fill your horizon with. That is not—honest."

Her voice, low, steady, probed mercilessly into the truth of things, but he listened with grave attention.

"If I assume an obligation, I must abide by it. People have no right to shirk a duty just because they have made a mistake."

"People have a right to consider the broad meaning of the word duty," she protested. "It isn't your duty to stay here and die. It is your duty to do the necessary things to prolong your life and to help those who need help. You are not stupid! Analyse your own motives. Weigh your worth to one negative duty, and then to the other countless claims that are all around you. Will you?"

She had burned her bridges!—and the little pulse in her throat beat chokingly as she tried to read in the coldly unresponsive eyes something that would indicate what it had cost her. But he only said quietly:—"I'll see."

She thrust the hair back from her temples with a weary gesture, then with a sigh and smile, dropped her left hand to the clasp of his. The clasp was wrist and wrist, and she glanced down, and then back to his face.

"'Wrist and wrist'—it is the gymnast's grip, where lives hang on its firmness," she said slowly. Then with the finger tips of her right hand, she traced lightly the back of his hand and fingers. "The hand that holds lives——! Be careful that it does not let them go, and that its strength is merciful, *monseigneur!*"

CHAPTER FORTY-FIVE

AFTER he had gone, she finished a chapter of translations to be sent him the next morning, then she wrote far into the night and enclosed the closely written sheets with the MSS.

We "must abide by our mistakes—!"

Man of walls and forms and creeds, of inflexible will and inexorable purpose, of cold, grey laws and unyielding codes,—scrupulously just in the pound of flesh, and of adamant indifference to the slow, red drops that drip and sear and scar—splendidly honest and splendidly indifferent to the consequences of honesty, be they for weal or woe—I wonder—I wonder——!

Do you suppose there is any wrongness in your rightness? The poor ninety-eight per cent. hungers for Egypt's fleshpots—it is human and wants human food. It is cold and wants to be warmed. It is lonely and wants to be comforted. It is footsore and wants the sustaining arm. It is heart-sick and wants love and understanding. It wants—and wants—as the child wants, because it is only a child crying in the dark.

"If they mistake let them suffer"—— Ah, you dreadful good people! Why, all life is a series of mistakes. And death is a mistake in that it lags so in the coming. And every breath and every day brings its suffering—it is inevitable and unceasing. Your kind who lift high the Mosaic code, mount a huge bronze Conscience on an altar between your eyes and the sun, and then swear that warmth is sin because you like the fog and the cold. Your

kind sacrifice to the bronze god with the same enthusiasm that the flagellant uses his whips. There is a fine and fastidious satisfaction in crucifying the flesh. But it isn't morals, dear *monseigneur!* It is merely ethical epicureanism.

"Intellectuals" owe much to their good taste. Fear restrains the ignorant, but intelligence rejects that which offends in morals for the same reason that it is critical about its linen. That, however, is but the outcome of good breeding and not necessarily the indication of a Chosen People—a people "after God's own heart."

Like the angels who saved "Little Breeches" instead of "loafing around the throne," a conscience content to walk among the blundering and suffering ninety-eight and ease their bonds, would be much closer to my own humbly human deity than that chill brown Brahma of yours.

Do you never relent, *monseigneur?* Do you never weary of those inaccessible heights? You "hold back the sea" it is true—but you thrust back, too, the weaker ninety-eight, forgetting that the crag is one, the birds many. You are so positive, and you offer these poor things your ten commandments to apply as an ice compress to a condition with ten hundred phases. To their hunger you give the stone of your own asceticism, to their thirst you give the dry gourd of endurance and denial.

And all the while your God is draping the earth with loveliness and warmth and colour—is opening the Heavens from which descends the passion song of the nightingale—the scarlet and gold of wooing butterflies—the perfume of magnolia and jasmine.

Why, Eminence?

As an exquisite refinement of cruelty, do you think?

To drive in the ache, with super-cunning, to hearts human and sore?

I do not think so! We are the poles asunder, you and I. You have suffered for your stone gods and their brutal feet are red with the years you have laid, one by one, before them. And I have suffered—and I have stood alone at times while your gods rumbled malediction and threat. But fear has passed me by—and down the hill and through the wood, the new gods are coming. And their eyes are tender and their lips laugh and they bear garlands.

Do you never relent, *monseigneur?* Do you never weary of the heights?

CHAPTER FORTY-SIX

THE series of Dan Cupid sketches were running into little stinging cartoons that were catching the public's eye and bringing a response. The anti-child labour workers were enthusiastic in their gratitude to the artist and the syndicate whose wide area of service reached so far and helped their cause so wonderfully.

Capital, however, was not idle and its scouts quickly drew the attention of the chiefs to this dangerous element that was rousing the sympathies and activities of the people. June had caught a flagrant bit of law-dodging that had been winked at by the assistant prosecuting attorney, and had pricked that gentleman with a satire that was illuminating. The powers behind her were still strong enough to back her up, but certain ominous vibrations that reached her indicated that the heavy subterranean machinery of state politics was in motion and that she was a grain of dust that its iron jaws awaited.

The Prosecuting Attorney himself was not particularly disturbed by the bit of convenient good-nature evinced by his colleague in the comparatively unimportant lawsuit in question, but he had a speculative eye on the Gubernatorial chair, and in politics not even the slipper of a Cinderella may be permitted to endanger the smooth-running wheels by a possible *"Sabotin."*

And it was deemed advisable to pluck out the little wooden shoes.

So one day the Senator arranged to escort June to the Prosecuting Attorney's chambers in the City Hall. That

august person and two other gentlemen who were personally interested in the politics of the State, awaited them.

June acknowledged their salutations with grave courtesy and accepted the arm-chair offered her. The gentlemen then resumed their own seats, and the Prosecutor thanked her for acceding to his request for an interview. Then, following a slight pause surcharged with significance, he touched upon her attacks upon his office.

He regretted exceedingly that she had been misinformed and thus led into making a pictorial accusation that was untrue, but he was willing to overlook it, as she was a woman and harsh measures were to be deplored! So all he would request was a written statement that she was in error, which the gentlemen present would witness, and he would agree to take no further action in the matter.

As the smoothly polished sentences closed with a happily phrased blending of gentle reproof and magnanimous forgiveness, the gentlemen present stirred and exchanged glances of admiring approbation. What, indeed, could be fairer, broader, kinder than that?

And with one accord they turned and looked expectantly at June. The great desk in the centre of the imposing apartment bore pen, ink and paper, and before it, the mahogany chair of the official himself was swung invitingly her way. It would take but a moment and an unfortunate little blunder would be, in part, atoned, and the incident closed and charitably forgotten. She preferred a stub pen, of course? Most writers did! And now if she would be so good——!

"But, you see, gentlemen, I was not misinformed," said Miss Ferriss quietly. There was a sudden silence and the gentlemen carefully avoided each other's eyes. They

waited for their guest to go on—to elaborate, while they rearranged their disordered tactics. But Miss Ferriss did not go on. She waited with courteous, but obvious, patience for anything further they might have to say.

This was disconcerting and annoying. It is difficult for even a trained diplomat to "place" a person who is silent.

"Your information came from——?" The Prosecuting Attorney at last suggested gently, and Miss Ferriss finished the sentence as gently: "—An authoritative source—yes."

The gentlemen sighed and one absently reached into his pocket for a cigar and, with another sigh, put it back again.

"You wish us to understand that you take advantage of your sex in attacking my office, knowing that we cannot fight a woman?"

The voice of the official hardened and June's eyebrows lifted just a shade.

"I hardly think it necessary to remind the Prosecuting Attorney that the publication, not the writer, is responsible for its matter," she replied evenly. "Sex does not enter into the question."

One of the gentlemen cleared his throat uneasily, but the official leaning a little forward with his shrewdly penetrating eyes on June's face, said with a dignified simplicity that was impressive: "Miss Ferriss, if I give you my word that your attack upon me is unwarranted, will you retract it?"

She bent her head gravely and the atmosphere cleared as though by magic.

"Where it reflects upon you, yes," she said. "It is your associate who is in fault."

Dismay again darkened the room. They were back where they began!

"That will not do! I am responsible for my office," said the Prosecuting Attorney sternly.

June's eyebrows again lifted a shade, and again she bent her head gravely.

"As you please, of course!"

She spoke with courteous indifference, and the man facing her compressed his lips.

"I gave you my word that the attack was unwarranted, Miss Ferriss!" he repeated, the sternness in his tones now having a steel-like quality that gave evidence of the secret of his power of leadership—a power that was yet to carry him far and high.

"Or so you believe," she replied, meeting the cold anger in his eyes with quiet interest. "My evidence is beyond question, Mr. Courtnay."

"But my office is myself!"

"Unfortunately," she assented.

It was evening when June Ferriss and the worried Senator Keith crossed the pavement to his waiting motor. For over three hours the state official and his associates had explained and suggested and argued, while back of their courtesy mumbled audibly the mighty grinding of the machine. For over three hours June Ferriss had declined and countered and evaded. In her presence police officials, court officials and newspaper men were called up on the phone and cross examined. Some of these were safe. From others she had received clues and "tips" and her breath came unevenly while the sharp and confusing questions were hurled at them through the transmitter by the high official.

Not for a moment was she free from the keen, watch-

ful eyes of the powerful manipulators of the State's men and affairs, and not for a moment had she permitted a shade of emotion to cross her face while the network of wires that spread over the City was used as a web to entrap, if possible, her informants.

At the "Lion d'Or," a four-minute spin from the City Hall, the Senator ordered dinner. The head waiter had obligingly placed them at a retired table, remote from the crowd and music, and June dropped her face in her hands.

"I only want coffee, Bob—my head is aching and I am not hungry."

"All right, girl. A bottle of Amontillado and a dozen blue-points, Harris," the Senator said, and turned his attention to the headlines of the evening paper.

When the order came, he poured out the sherry and said briskly: "Now then, young person! Drink this!"

She lifted her head with an effort and smiled wanly. Then she obediently drank the wine. Her companion was busy with the horse-radish, and as she set down her glass he balanced a small, well-garnished oyster on his fork and imperatively bade her "open her mouth." Her weak protest was ferociously scowled into silence, and she was carefully fed six of the oysters.

"Good child!" he commented. "Now I will finish the order—some bird-feed for you—and we'll talk. You will be able to eat something after that horse-radish warms your ickle tummy."

She dropped her aching head back on her hands as he turned to finish his instructions to the waiter. When that worthy had departed, he drew a note from his pocket, opened it, and laid it on the cloth between her arms. She opened her eyes and read:

"For Heaven's sake be sensible and think of your own

responsibilities a bit! Bob says you are getting into some kind of trouble over your child-labour things. Drop them! What need you care? Those ungrateful little mill wretches won't thank you, and the parents want their money, so they won't thank you! And who will?—And who of those same people would lift a hand to fight your battles for you? Leave all that to people who have the time and strength for it, and do as Bob will advise you. You know that you can trust to his judgment! Be sensible, June child!" The note was signed "T. K."

As she looked down between her hands, the sentences swam back and forth through little rings of fire. She was fagged out, and the old auger of pain was boring stubbornly into her side. It was the reaction after the long strain while she matched wills with those courteous, shrewdly relentless men, and it seemed as though it had drained every drop of strength and courage out of her, and that she was too ill to care how things ever went again.

"Don't be a fool, June." The Senator's voice, practical and reassuring, took up her train of thought. "You are up against the Machine and you can't buck the Machine, my dear! You wouldn't last a minute. They want you to just quietly drop out of the fight, and it will be all right. If you don't, bigger wires will be pulled and your papers will have to hedge. Your little wooden shoe has begun to make trouble—has made trouble—but the Machine always beats in the end. You can't stop it."

The waiter had returned, and June lifted her head heavily and let her arms drop into her lap while she watched his deft ministrations with dull eyes.

When he had arranged the order to his final satis-

faction, he respectfully melted into the background, watchful but unobtrusive. Urged by her host, June made an attempt to eat some of the delicate fare his care had selected for her, but it was as ashes on her lips.

Senator Keith, affluent, well-groomed, of excellent digestion and at peace with himself and with the world, ate his dinner with frank appreciation. He had no quarrel with the established order, and his appetite was good.

"My perfectly good money wasted," he said sadly as he fixed June's idly toying fork with a disapproving eye. "The next time I will take you to Childs'! I have here," he continued lightly, "an envelope. It is from the Machine. The Machine may be a little rude in insisting upon wooden footwear being kept where it belongs, but it does business in a business-like manner. Your series is contracted for by your syndicate. To stop them would be a loss. The Machine consequently buys the sketches that were to have been run. That is only fair. And as they also brought you more or less fame, the Machine has multiplied the amount still due you by twenty."

He slipped the envelope carelessly into the small silver bag on her lap, and picked up his wine-glass.

"And now you will be sensible, as Toots says, and get out of the political game. *N'est ce pas?* It is a dirty game—we have to admit that. It is no place for people who look too closely into the corners and around the seams. But we, who play the game and do not look too closely, have to take the certain amount of bad because, after all, it puts through a still greater amount of good. We are not all blackguards, honey! But we have to take human nature as we find it. And while it is pretty rotten in some respects, it squares up and does the decent thing in the long run."

His tone was comfortingly casual, but the occasional fleeting glance at the quiet woman facing him, turning and turning the little glass with its rich topaz lights, was the photographic glance of the schooled politician. And he was not surprised when she extracted the envelope and slid it across to his side of the table.

"You do it very well, Robert!" She looked at him over the pretty candle-lighted table with a humorous lighting of the eyes. But it died out quickly, leaving her face looking haggard and white. "I didn't agree to market my little pictures to politicians, you know. So we won't quarrel over rates yet awhile."

"June, you are a fool!" Keith laid down his cigar and leaned across the table. His casual manner dropped from him, and his serious tone was ominous. "These men are not going to let you interfere with their business. They have too much at stake. You are a menace. Those biting little cartoons flick them in the raw. They are stirring the Public—and politicians don't want the Public stirred, except when they do it themselves. Other times the Public sleeps, while politics runs things. You are going to be stopped. It will take longer to stop you through your syndicate—it is acting a little stubbornly just now. But it will be harnessed sooner or later. And then you will be squeezed out and black-balled. No other service will dare run your work. I tell you, you can't buck the Machine! It will grind you to powder."

She looked at him with a faint, inscrutable smile in her haggard eyes.

"Finish——!" she prompted gently.

"Well, you are in the way," he said flatly. "Every new sketch blocks the game. Every one you still run will add to the labour of the Machine. You can hold out awhile, and it will make a devil of a lot of trouble.

But they will get you, and that means that when they do, they will finish you. You are in the way. You can't afford it, June!"

She straightened up with a long, difficult sigh and drew on her gloves.

"You have done your best, Bob. Now put me on my train." As he held her coat and looked anxiously down at her, she in turn looked strangely back at him and added —"You don't understand, you see!"

During the short run to Ferncliff she sat with closed eyes. The vibration of the train hurt her and the complete exhaustion pulled at her sick nerves cruelly. And she knew that the time of her influence was short. What she could still do with her little sketches, she would make as strong as possible, but she knew what power was back of the Machine and she knew as well as Keith how far that power could reach.

She knew, also, what it would mean when her work was black-balled. She would be able to do certain lines of commercial work, but that branch was very poorly paid and her income would be sweepingly reduced.

As the train swung smoothly through the darkness, she crouched in the corner of the seat with her throbbing head against the cold window pane. Usually her courage fought stubbornly against obstacles, but to-night she felt woefully alone and adrift. She had faced so many problems since the care-free Island days, and at last her strength seemed to have ebbed and the new complications that threatened bore down on her spirit, dark and menacing. The fight had been so long, the anxieties so many! And now it was to begin again, the laboured struggling against contending forces, like a water-logged ship.

When she turned into the lane that led to the cabin, she saw the soft glow of the casement windows and her throat contracted suddenly. She would have to give it up, the little cabin under the trees, and go back to the City, perhaps. Commercial work did not admit of leisurely methods, as a rule, and one had to be accessible at all times. And to go back would mean—it would mean leaving the people of Ferncliff. It would mean leaving——

She paused at the door and in the darkness leaned her cheek against it. She was so heart-sick—she was so deadly heart-sick!

When she opened the door and entered, she faced Dr. Orth.

He had just come from her father's room and he looked at her curiously as she moved apathetically toward the fire-place and slowly took off her coat and hat, dropping them on a chair.

She avoided his eyes and sat down on an ottoman, absently chafing her cold hands while she stared into the flickering logs.

"You look very tired," he said at last.

"I am—yes."

Her voice was spiritless, but she turned and looked up at him with a shadowy smile. "And so are you tired."

He came over to the fire-place and stood with his arm stretched out, braced against the old-fashioned mantel as he looked down at her.

"Hadn't you better take things a little easier for awhile? Let the translations go for a few evenings and try early hours till you are rested."

Without replying, she took his left hand that hung at his side, between her own two, and thoughtfully

smoothed it out on her own left hand, while she drew the tip of her finger across its palm.

"I wonder if you have a line of compassion among these hieroglyphics."

She lifted her heavily shadowed eyes and looked at him strangely.

"You should not do that!"

The always cold voice held now reproof, but the clasp of her fingers did not relax. "I know," she said indifferently. "Your whole creed is made up of 'you should not.' We should not do this, that, and the other, we people. But I wonder if there are not things you good people sometimes should do, and don't! Are there not the passive sins—the 'I have left undone those things which I ought to have done' of the litany? If you see a sheep caught in the bramble and having a pretty hard time of it, is it necessary to ask the legislature whether it would be a breach of ethics to go over and help it out?"

Her face was dead-white but in her eyes smouldered the light of pain and its protest.

"The work I do for you—with you—does not tire me. You know that. It is the joy of labour, not the drudgery. It has given me the stimulus that has enabled me to do my other work and make it acceptable. I——"

She stopped suddenly, then turned his hand to the gymnast's wrist-hold. "It helps me—and to-night I need help. I am—I am tired." Her lips twitched and she bit them to steadiness. In her eyes appeal came and deepened, telling of long endurance giving, at last, to the pressure of circumstance. The clasped hands she drew to her breast and whispered desperately: "Say that you—care! John Orth! John Orth!"

For a long moment the spirit that looked through her

straining eyes beat against the barriers of his. Then the answer came, coldly cruel as that of Salem Puritan: "I would not say it even to save your soul!"

Very gently her fingers unclasped from his wrist, and she sat with the back of her hand against her lips and her eyes closed, while the flames whispered and chuckled in their play of hide-and-seek among the logs.

He watched her in his strangely impassive way and at last she looked at him, without resentment, with just the unprotesting wonder of soul sickness.

"It is strange, isn't it? I have wanted you so long. And now, to have you as just another form of torture— It is a—pity, isn't it?"

Her voice trailed through the broken sentences, then she moved uncertainly over to her seat at the desk.

"You are not going to work any more to-night?" The words were curt, the voice cold, and she lifted her eyes to his face and looked at him with curious intentness.

"No."

She did not speak again as he turned in his peculiar silent way and left her. But her gaze, heavy with pain, followed him.

CHAPTER FORTY-SEVEN

THE next day orders came from the Editor-in-Chief of the Syndicate to crowd her child-labour matter. "They are after us," he wrote. "We can't hold out long, but work your prettiest while you can. If you can waken the better element and get them going, even the Machine can't stop them."

One or two of the little story-sketches that had already formed in her brain, she finished and sent in. But something was wrong—the ideas after were confused and came draggingly, and when she tried to force the work it was mechanical. Sketch and story failed to "ring true."

"Can't use it. What's the matter? There's no 'bite.' Buck up, pardner!"

He was a good friend, this strenuous, over-worked man who sat at a battered desk in a shabby office in his shirt-sleeves, high over the City, playing the great newspaper game. She did not want to fail him any more than she wanted to fail herself. But the mainspring had snapped somehow, and the Voices no longer told her things.

"A belief that hurts is wrong," John Orth had said in his slow inexorable way. But each moment's hurt seemed but another step up the Sancta Scala—the sacred stair of pain that led to clearer sight.

This he read in the next package of translations that came from her:

The argument of a strong man should be strong. Is "Expediency for the sake of comfort" this? To be pas-

sive, to go with the herd, to follow the path of least resistance, to drift and be still—is not that poor stuff to nourish a strong soul?

I sometimes wonder if your paradoxical qualities are not perhaps part of the "plan"—to drop acid-fashion on my own sight, to clarify through pain. Do you not see that you, the Man, pull down the trim house of cards that you, the theorist, build so cleverly? The latter is neatly correct, a habitation fit for the neatly correct personality. But the builder has depths and heights that loom as Pharaoh's pile back of trumpery modern Rome. Can you close your eyes to the absurdity of it?

"A belief that hurts is wrong. It should be weeded out." The path that is not popular is lonely—so leave it. It cannot be right!

What of the little prairie schooner, dot of white crawling toward the great sunset?—the pathfinder with his toy axe, breasting uncharted forests?—the Columbus on his chip of wood in mid-ocean? The conservatives support—but it is the radical who first creates, *monseigneur.*

Because my creeds find me with the few, they are false creeds—Why is the mob right? Because they echo through unbuilded spaces that chill the heart, they are wrong—Have the gaunt mountains less authority than the raucous rabble of the tenements? Because I refuse to say that legality cleanses bonds that are of the flesh only—that law can make pure the impure—that legislation can make children of love out of those bred only of the body—I am dangerous. So, then, must be the "plague squads" of England's army who elbow Death when they clean the coolie huts.

Your creed creates nothing. It is a grey stone shaft in a graveyard. It has neither roots to feed nor branches to reach to the stars. The arbutus climbs up with delicate

fingers to carry it something of tenderness and sweetness and falls away blighted by its chill.

You have trained your telescope on that one object so long you can see nothing else. It has made of you ice and iron in a world that moans always for warmth and pity. It has moulded your strength into a Code of concrete, against which Life bruises piteous hands that plead for comfort.

Your Master gave you a talent and you have buried it in a vault. The strength that could have meant so much is negative. You have baptised it in the name of dead prophets and dedicated it to a moribund god and made of your brain and your logic a Cerberus to keep it inviolate. A great Power that could have moved and moulded and made men and affairs, you have perverted instead into a hod-carrier to build a wall higher and ever higher between yourself and your tuppeny deity, and the great suffering world that weeps like a hurt child for a comforter and shelter.

If of such are the moral-righteous, then the world needs the unmoral-tender. Your creed has made laws that have filled the imbecile asylums and hospital wards and prisons. The spawn of soul nausea is not the stuff that men are made of. Your narrow code breeds jails and prisoners to feed them—but it never yet gave to the world what Love has given it to make it beautiful. The great women and great men who have given music and marble and picture and poem to life, to lift it from the ox-yoke and the furrow, listened humbly when love spoke. Had they not done so, Life would have known only the Night Court and its birds of darkness—never the Cathedral with its spires and doves.

"By their fruits" is the only gauge. And what have you to show? A long martyrdom—self-immolation—the

dumb patience of the flagellant. You have endured to the breaking point and beyond. You have crucified heart and soul and brain and body. You have hungered and thirsted and you have starved—all at the feet of a Majolica god that grinned at the enormity of the sacrifice and the futility of its aim.

You have given your life to brace your back against a rotten wall. And it only goes on crumbling around you. Your eyes are heavy with the Atlas-burden of it and your lips grim with self-denial—of the warmth they have not known, the words they have repressed, the long, long breath that beats up and up to where the gods bend with soft laughter and tender eyes, to listen.

All this you have not known, which means that you have not lived—that all effort has been abortive—that you have strangled the divine in you that was meant to create gracious things and silenced the soul's protest with rattling chains and dry bones.

You pride yourself on your conscience—you! And the crudest, elemental sins rise up against you—to lie, to steal, to murder. For you perjure yourself when you uphold your whited sepulchres because you fear the world could not stand Truth in her nudeness and purity. You have taken away the Voices—they had, through you, begun to speak. In my great relief I told you. And in immediate panic you cried, with Peter, "I know not the man!" And so you committed the third sin—On the little messages that pleaded for utterance—that perhaps soften a heart here, touch a conscience there—you laid the heavy hand of silence, as you have laid it on your own gift, making it cold and hard.

Your rectitude that kills is a sin against the Holy Ghost. To it you have nailed with steady hand the lives you could have helped, the hurt you could have healed.

You were given an exceptional mind and that wonderful gift of clothing thoughts in words stately and beautiful—of marshalling Life's chaotic and fugitive ideas into exquisite order and perfection—of piercing through to essentials with rare, unerring touch. And all that exotic growth you have blackened with the ruthless frost of fanatic resolve. I have fought to save it—to give it life—to make it articulate. Whether yours be the pen or mine, what matter so the work be done? Of all the created and creative things, written words are the most potent and far reaching. They live when the painting is black, the marble dust, the song forgotten. Their power is limitless, their work unending.

And this gift from the Godhead itself you scorn, as a bigoted peasant who takes a wonder-crystal whose glinting colours picture all Life and with it grinds his meal. It is to that in you I have paid homage—to the brain to think, the strength to do, the power to call my Voices and make them speak, the dominion over men and women that matches my dominion over them, the sovereignty of Mind that leads and controls and shapes lesser minds. In this I have called to a peer—in strength and incisiveness and poise to a superior. We could create, as other minds have met and created, things that would live when you with your bigotry, I with my humanness, are alike dust and indifferent. Where you control by sheer intellect, I lead because I have suffered and loved and understand. We could create, as we have created, and the world be the better for it.

But blind and deaf to all but your stupid gods, you lay the ban of silence on all that makes life worth while. The non-fulfilment is your privilege but it is also your Sin. That you debase gifts of power and prophecy is an insolence to the Giver. You tear down the Vatican

to pave an alley—set a Colossus of possibility astride a tinkling runlet—repudiate a gift of kings to hug a lot of old wives' tales in worm-eaten binding.

And the message that should have swept far out on inspired wings, falls instead like a stone in a pool.

Be human—the God of the Christian found that necessary to deliver his message! Asceticism and a cell, monastic denial—they are death, and the world needs life.

What a woeful jest it all is!—the Power laid in your inert hand, the dull ache of unborn things—the pain "as the milk comes when the babe is dead"—the heartbreak of Pegasus and the dragging plough—what a woeful jest it all is!

CHAPTER FORTY-EIGHT

AT last a day came when another protest from her Chief had enclosed a communication from the Anti-Child Labour League—an appeal—and June Ferriss read both and then sat at her useless drawing-board with her face in her hands. During Dr. Orth's visits with Mr. Ferriss, under the trees on the little lawn or in front of the open fire, June Ferriss had crossed lances with his masterful mind and the opposition and fencing with his keen insight, his remarkably balanced logic and his determined defence of his views, had been a delight.

From the stubborn battle of wits she turned with wondering joy to the new mental vistas that opened before her, and this vitalising of her powers found fluent expression in word-painting and sketch, while her influence over the people of the mill district grew into almost uncanny strength.

Life had flushed, warmed, into new and splendid radiance. It had flooded heart and brain with its glory of colour and out of her abundance she reached out a vibrating strength "that was a strength of ten" to the weaker and poorer who, bewildered and astray, turned eagerly to her guidance and support.

It was John Orth's caustic wit that scintillated with vicious little sparks through her attacks on the Machine. It was his far sight that reached with instant and unerring precision to points that slower minds laboured to by degrees. It was the wonderful, rare sweetness of the man making itself known in some subtle way through the pitilessly cold exterior that masked it, that lighted the little

lamp in her soul that made her work a power felt even through the mad turmoil of the City.

And when the City had shown its teeth and her strength wavered and sank, it was to him she turned to still her fright and pain. And he had failed her.

A stern battle for bread was again confronting her, and memory spared her nothing of its sordid bitterness. For once—for the first time—utter weakness had engulfed her and she had appealed to a stronger for comfort. The fighter learned that she was the woman as well; that she, as the primal woman and the woman of all the ages, must needs cry to the greater soul that was her soul's lord.

And he—man, friend or lover, she could not tell!—encased in the baffling armour of his Puritan orthodoxy, had thrust her back to face her darkness alone.

And all in a moment the thronging ideas failed her and the Voices were silent. Try as she would, she could not recall them. Like a flock of startled birds, their wings had beat confusedly around her and then had turned to flight. The board waited, the clever pencil had not forgot its cunning, but the inspiration was gone.

That evening as she sat at her drawing-board trying to whip her numbed mind into action, the iron knocker sounded and when she opened the door the surgeon came quietly in.

He followed her to the desk and looked down at the drawing critically, then his gaze travelled in its deliberate fashion to her face.

"Poor work," he commented gravely.

"It should please you!" she exclaimed, a vibration of despairing pain in her low voice. "I am failing the

children. But your respectability is not endangered, which is of much more importance, of course."

"Why should I influence it one way or another?" he asked in a tone of impersonal interest in the psychology of the thing.

She threw out her hands with a gesture of protest.

"Ask your God, who made us of mind as well as matter. I am what I am. I was not consulted about the plan nor my limitations. After your life crossed mine, my life broadened, deepened. My work was not only amusing—it began to say things. And I was grateful, because I was doing some little good in a world that needs much. Why I needed you to bring out that ability, you will have to ask the Power that so ordained it. It is your privilege to confine your interest and influence to the knife and the body. But there are maimed and imprisoned and suffering souls as well, and your churches no longer reach. The problem has turned to the layman. And every little helps—mine and yours make their impression."

"But why necessarily—together?"

Her breast lifted with a long breath and she did not answer at once. The reproach that smouldered in her eyes, heavily ringed with sleeplessness, faded, and she turned and looked through the small-paned windows and up at the serene stars that shone clearly through the crisp autumn night.

"Why?" The shadowy eyes were wistful as they turned back to his face. "Is not the beginning and end and meaning of all life in that 'together'? Can we do much—the strongest of us!—alone?"

For a long moment his strangely veiled gaze searched down into her eyes, and then with quiet deliberation he laid his left hand on hers. It turned slowly, palm up-

ward, and the flexible fingers of surgeon and artist closed, wrist and wrist.

She laid her cheek against his coat-sleeve and when she raised her head again, her eyes were wet.

"Je vous aime——" she slowly whispered, a little whimsical smile on lips that trembled. *"De tout mon cœur, et de toute mon ame!* Let me say it in English! You won't 'send me to Coventry'!——"

In his eyes and on the stern lips there came the slow, wonderfully sweet smile that bound people to him in bewildered but unprotesting subjugation. It was the smile that those who loved him watched for on Lincoln's wearily sad face, and at whose bidding they faced destruction and death gladly.

The clasped wrists were held against her breast closely and the whisper—low, unsteady—came to him through the shadowy stillness: "I love you—with all my heart—and my soul—beloved!—beloved!——"

Under his hand he felt the thick beating of her heart, then she lifted the palm against her lips and held it there while the old clock ticked with merciful slowness Life's golden seconds.

When she lifted her head, her eyes were luminous as they looked up at him and she said, with a little tremulous laugh: "I haven't a shred of pride left, and not even enough self-respect to care. I just 'glory in ma shame,' like Scotch Weelum. I know that I have been wanting you since the beginning of time, through all the incarnations. And that night of the Exhibit at the Inn, I called you—John Orth!—as I must have called you hundreds of years ago. You turned at once and came straight across the room, and I was not even surprised. Ah, my dear!—how I have wanted you!"

With her free hand she touched his coat-sleeve, draw-

ing her sensitive finger tips delicately down its length and loving, as women do who love greatly, the rough tweed because it was so familiarly a part of him.

"And how abominably hateful you have been," she added resentfully. "Say 'I do.'"

"I hav'n't—I have only tried to make you behave yourself. 'I do' what?"

"I have behaved! When you have been snippy and superior, I always turned the other cheek. Never mind what! Just say 'I do.'"

"But I don't understand——" he protested, regarding her with stern suspicion.

"Say it!"

"I do—but remember, I don't know what it means!" he warned her solemnly, but with the glint of boy-laughter she loved to call to his eyes.

"And you do not need to!" A long sigh lifted the soft muslin folds crossed over her breast and she shook her head with grave reproach. "If I had the power of turning a soul's night into day, or day to night, how carefully I would use it!"

As he picked up his hat, she regarded him judicially and nodded.

"Yes," she murmured. "When you are nice you are very, very nice. But when you are horrid, you are really the most impossible person——!"

Their eyes exchanged a little smile, then he opened the door in his quiet way. She was leaning across the board, her arms stretched out and her hands clasped lightly. In the soft glow of the lamp her eyes were brimming with the mirthful teasing that flickers its sunlight on the ripples over passion's fathomless deeps.

Her lips prompted, forming soundlessly the words—"June, I do!"

And it was the Boy that laughed softly in reply, the stern lips quivering amusedly as they, too, formed carefully and soundlessly the cryptic words that she clung to—her Life's largesse——

"June, I do!"

CHAPTER FORTY-NINE

WITH keen delight June Ferriss answered to the on-crowding "urge" that kept her closely at work as the days passed. There was a vital, exultant beat to her pulses that sent the ideas swarming through her mind and the acid of stinging satire and gripping truth into her finely pointed brush. She felt the faith of Holy Writ that could move mountains. She felt the lust of war that was a holy war—that used her and her talent as an obedient instrument that was for the liberation of haggard and yellow little children, harnessed to labour for the Machine. The numbing exhaustion, the pain that sapped her courage, the crying out of wrenched nerves—all this that had turned like wolves on her mental powers and left her bankrupt, vanished. A star had risen in the East and in her eyes shone its glory—a glory beyond reach of a Machine's bribe or threat.

"Good work!" her Chief scrawled. His back was against the wall. He was now almost alone, as his colleagues, one by one, yielded to the inexorable and far-reaching tentacles of the political Monster. His jaw was an ugly jaw and his eyebrows beetled, but he knew that he could be whipped and he took his last stand with a grim arming with every weapon that his fertile brain could summon to make that stand count to its last degree.

In his uptown home was a woman with grey hair and bravely humorous eyes, a woman who was his "helpmeet" in the best and broadest sense. And much farther out the autumn leaves were sifting on a very small grave. Which were two of the reasons the ugly jaw settled

into its fighting grip, while June's talent flickered its desperate heliograph appeals across a continent to waken a sluggish people to its sins.

Nearly three weeks had passed since her conference in the City Hall, when she returned one day from the City, worried and depressed.

"They're getting me, June Ferriss,—damn 'em!"—the words of the fighting editor beat their ominous tocsin on the revolving wheels as the train tore through the dusk. They were getting him! And the short time was narrowing down now, to days.

"They're getting him, Jimmy Ferriss!" she repeated as she sat down and smiled woefully at her father and Dr. Stanley across the dinner table. "There won't be a home-stretch, Katrinka. They won't let us match our strength and speed with theirs in a fair race. We are to be disqualified!"

James Ferriss reached his fine, transparent hand across and patted the artist hands clasped tensely where they rested on the table.

"This is a race that is not to the swift nor to the strong, girl," he said gravely. "Your little skits and the Service have let loose powers that will not sleep. The great Human is pretty decent in the final analysis. Once get it awake and its great foot can come down disastrously on even a Machine. And your gadflies have disturbed its slumber persistently and long enough to make it restless and inquisitive. That has been your part. You cannot do more than you can do. So leave the rest to the Fate that has used you and is now about through with you."

"In other words, give some one else a whirl at running the Universe," added the doctor crisply. "You can't build Rome nor pull down a legislature in a day, so take

your shoulder away from the wheel and try and get your breath. Quite a few wrongs existed before you came into this Vale of Tears, and there will be several left after you are comfortably cremated. And picking with your fork isn't eating—it's a poor bluff what don't deceive nobody. Bring her some sherry, Nora darlint!"

June pulled herself together and tried to laugh, and obediently drank the sherry. But she had no knowledge of what the faithful Nora was serving her and as little desire to eat it. Her whole being seemed to be tensely listening, waiting, and her own voice sounded far away and unreal as she joined in the light table-talk and banter of the other two. At last it came—the name she had been waiting for—and her fingers tightened on the little cup of black coffee she was toying with.

"Yes, he said he had a full hour that he could steal from the hospital," Mr. Ferriss was telling Dr. Kate. "So he spent it with me and we had a comfortable stag-party in front of the fire."

"I told him at clinic that June had gone to the City for the day, and he said he would try and get over and help you bear your desertion. He looks mighty peaked, that man!"

Dr. Stanley's usually crisp tones had a note of deep concern and she frowned down at her coffee absently. Mr. Ferriss' transparently delicate features clouded.

"He is ill—unquestionably seriously ill. And we can only stand helplessly by and see it grow more serious! Who can 'minister to a mind diseased'! What can any one do while conditions are as they are?"

"Yes, and they are villainously bad," Dr. Stanley returned shortly. "That man's patience and sense of duty verge on the criminal. I know that he fills me with an unholy desire to give that creature a dose of her favourite

blend that will keep her quiet for good and all! Her latest stunt is to take an over-dose, when he is at work in his study or asleep, and go in and tell him about it. That means a hurry call for Carl or me, emetics, stomach-pumps, and all the other real nice, attractive features connected with that sort of a *séance*."

She got up and went over to the fire-place where she braced her shoulders against the mantel, while Mr. Ferriss settled himself in his own easy chair. June, at her desk, leaned over an open drawer sorting some papers. But there was a mist of pain over her eyes and a band tightened sickeningly across her breast.

The exasperated voice over by the fire went on:—"The creature has an uncanny shrewdness in concocting new forms of torment for that man, and this latest she has down to a fine art. She always tells him immediately that she has suicided again, and of course knows prompt action will pull her through. She is yellow as a duck's foot and her breath is like a tannery, but that man stands by like a dumb soldier through three or four hours of performances that even make me sick. And next morning he goes to a clinic with his own reputation and several lives depending on the steadiness of his nerves. Oh, it's no use, Jimmy Ferriss! Parson Drake may call that sort of thing marriage, but I call it what Sherman called war. It's hell, of the plain, common, truck-garden variety. Dante was too picturesque—all his different circles had at least the compensation of being as thrilling as the movies. They are cursed, but interesting. John Orth's hell not only turns your heart over murderously, but turns your stomach."

CHAPTER FIFTY

IN the operating room of his hospital, the man under discussion was working over a case from the City, rushed to him on an evening train. Brother scientists, orderlies and nurses were clustered around him where he bent over the table in the white super-lighted room. Silently, deftly, instruments were passed from antiseptic bath to the swiftly careful hands and back again. The odour of ether grew heavier in the closed room, the tense faces of the assistants and watchers grew whiter, but the white-clad man in the centre of the white-clad group played his lone hand steadily, with Death his opponent and Love praying for love with passion's supreme agony in the waiting room beyond.

Daily, nightly, he played the game while lives trembled in the balance and in the ante-rooms breaking hearts waited. Daily, hourly, his skill was keyed to the highest pitch by demands that recognised no law of time nor limitation nor strength. Ordinary health requirements—sleep, food, rest, relaxation—these played scant part in the life of the surgeon, and though he had risen at five that morning for an early operation, it was nearly two the next morning before he left the hospital and crossed the grounds to his own home.

He had forgotten dinner. The servants had been instructed that when he worked late, milk and crackers be placed in his study. But this they had forgotten. The study was cold and looked neglected and cheerless, and in the intense stillness of those hours that just precede dawn, the very atmosphere seemed steeped with a sordid dreariness and hopelessness.

He looked over at the fire-place, but there, too, carelessness was eloquent in the burned-out log and scattered ashes.

The habitual calm of his face did not change, but instead of going into his bedroom, he slipped off his coat, drew a steamer rug around him and lay down on the couch.

In a moment he had sunk into the lethargy-slumber of complete exhaustion. His head was not comfortable on the leather cushion, the light from the library lamp streamed down on his face, and in its glare it looked like a waxen mask.

But he slept, though now and then the long breath of spent energies seemed to disturb him and the eyelids, sunk in the shadows of the sockets, fluttered uneasily.

He had slept about twenty minutes when the door opened and Mrs. Orth came in. She had a faded brown bathrobe on over her nightgown and the dry, broken hair straggled thinly to her shoulders. In her sallow face the eyes looked peculiarly hard with their over-dilated pupils, and they rested on the sleeping man with an expression of cunning.

Pulling a chair over the polished floor noisily, she sat down beside the couch, and hugged the bathrobe around her. The sleeper winced at the grating noise and murmured something, but did not waken. Then Mrs. Orth leaned over and shook him by the shoulder.

"Yes!—what is it?"

He started up on his elbow, his professional faculties instantly on the alert; but at sight of the woman beside him, the usual mask-like calm settled over his face, and he looked at her with his peculiar expressionless gaze.

"I just woke up, and I want to tell you my dream."

Mrs. Orth's thin, colourless lips smiled in enjoyment of the cunning she believed to be very subtle and deep.

"Won't it keep till to-morrow? I have just come from the hospital," he said tonelessly. But as she shook her head, he sank back on the hard cushion, closing his eyes for a moment as the glare of light struck down on them.

"No, I want to tell it before I forget." She drew her chair closer. "I saw you and that Ferriss man's daughter together. She was kneeling in front of you, and she was holding out her skirt. And you were throwing handfuls of bright, shining things on the skirt—handfuls and handfuls, a perfect shower! And she kept holding her skirt for more. And what do you suppose the shining things were?"

She bent forward eagerly to look into the eyes that watched her—eyes as opaque and impenetrable as earth-grey jade.

"What do you think they were?" she insisted and he replied quietly—"I am not good at guessing. Pray go on, if you have more to say."

"Why, it was money!" she cried triumphantly. "Don't you see? They say she is poor—that she can barely make ends meet. And she is going to be poorer yet, because she has made trouble with her pictures. You didn't know that, but I find out these things. She is poor, I tell you!"

"Well?—go on."

He spoke evenly, and her eyes grew sullen with disappointed anger.

"Well, I'll tell you. The dream was a warning to you. She pretends to be friendly, but she's after your money. She doesn't care anything about you. You were only a

farm-boy, anyhow. You were sort of bound out to my father."

Against the baffling, veiled gaze her anger hurled itself like muddied waves thick with jagged, nail-fanged wreckage.

"She wants your money—the dream proves that. She knows you have lots and she is going to be clever and get some of it. You are not young and smart looking like those men at the Inn, with their tennis-flannels and stylish golf clothes and riding clothes. What does she care about you, do you suppose, when she can flirt with them?"

The clock down in the hall boomed three muffled strokes. The man betrayed no impatience nor weariness.

"She doesn't care—she only wants your money. And now you know, because the dream shows it. You never can trust those queer people, and I always told you she was bad. Sister says so, and she knows. She knows how people talk about her and that child of hers, while she keeps her head in the air as though she was just as good as other people. She can't get anybody to marry her and she has to work and it serves her right. But she thought she could get those handfuls of money out of you and she can't! You are warned—my dream has warned you——"

On and on the eager voice went with its soiling stream of suspicion and accusation. The room grew colder with the coming dawn's death-like chill. The dying vines scratched ghostly fingers across the pane, in the wind that moaned uneasily around the house. Death and life—life and death—the tall clock in the hall ticked out with slow solemnity. The longness and the tiredness and the dun-coloured flatness of it all—life and death, and death

in life; and in the end, when it was all over and done with—for what?

When he was at last alone, the grey of coming day was paling the East. He turned out the light, and drawing the steamer rug around him with a shiver, lay down again and tried to sleep. But sleep now came only fitfully, and when he heard the servants stirring he had his fire started, took a cold shower, ordered some coffee and settled himself to work at his book.

In the last package of translations were some extra leaves, and as the eastern horizon sent filaments of amber and pale rose across the hills, he read what she had written, and then sat staring out at the distant pageantry of sky and cloud and wondrous changing color:

You do not play fair! You keep the letter and not the spirit of the "sending to Coventry" promise. You know the little Goupil print on my wall—the *"Maison de Sante"*—where the woman in chains crouches on the floor, with the stick of wood held in her arms like a child? In that abomination of desolation the eyes of her faith found colour and warmth and life in the thing she held. May not another woman build for herself a dream out of the stuff that dreams are made of?

The poor mad thing, hugging her bit of wood and scrap of bright cotton, content for a little space with her crudely pitiful make-shift, trying for an hour not to know what she knows too surely—is she game worthy your clever marksmanship? For a week of long hours and days and nights every fibre of her being had called—called——! And at last pulse-beat of wrist beat against pulse-beat of wrist—only that—and yet she leaned, as a

Mary leaned over a Child, finding in manger and straw a place of pain that held a glory illimitable.

May not your God "move in mysterious ways"? Are you quite sure you are never wrong? In her glass the woman saw "eyes that sang"—lips whose content was prayer. Perhaps her soul turned gropingly toward a Giver, sternly tender, whose long discipline meant but Probation. Perhaps in the pulse-beat that fell as little hammer-blows upon the bitterness and weariness that had imprisoned the soul, as the pearl in its shell, she read Design. And so her eyes sang—till you broke faith and quenched the song and touched with aloes the prayer upon the lips.

And why?—why? Can't you spare the poor dream-doll with its meagre finery? Must you repent a passing gentleness? May not your God have decreed that "At last" even if with it the inflexible "Thus far!" Is discipline greater than mercy that you deify it to the exclusion of all else?

Do Divine Eyes find pleasure in puritan frown? or pagan laughter? Might not honest unbelief toil doggedly on and in the end find a God of Love, while cold righteousness blindly worships an idol of stone? You are right and I am wrong? How do you know?

A lifetime ago I prayed—for you. You were the Grail—the outward and visible sign. I did not weary a possible Throne with supplication. I did—well or ill—my best, alone. The years gave and took back again, strength and interest ebbed, achievement thrilled and then ceased to thrill, and always I watched the dark horizon-line for the Sign—for you.

Life—a shambles that stained my skirt-hem with its blood and tears—I walked through, waiting for a God who would prove himself honest, who would give me

in the end the one thing he could give that could repay——.

What is worship? The thousand mummeries of a thousand warring sects? Or labour that endures and waits the payment of its wage?—that pays the tribute to its Master of the conviction that he will not cheat?——

He did not cheat. From your eyes—grey, cold, inscrutable—looked that for which I had waited. It came from immeasurable distances, from where dwelt a soul solitary and sufficient and wonderfully sane. It was the gaze of the impregnable, of absolute dominion of men and of self, of one in whom I could believe as the prelate believes in the wearer of the triple-crown, as the Royalist in his king.

This you may define as you will. Change it you could not. As it reaches back to a girl's prayer, so it reaches on to where wait eternal things. It is the first understanding between a Master who exacted much and a servant who trusted.

It was sunset when John Orth left the hospital and instead of going to his house, he turned down the lane that led to the mill road. When he opened the picket gate that led to the Ferriss cabin, he saw June's white wool gown through the trees.

She was looking at something she held in her hand, and as he approached she raised her head and regarded him with gravely meditative eyes. At her side he paused and stood with bared head and after a little, as she did not speak, he looked down at her hand.

"Is it hurt?" he asked.

"Beyond even your surgery—yes," she replied, looking at the little heap of crumpled feathers in her curved fingers. Then she knelt beside a dish of water she kept

always in the grass for the birds' drink and bath, and at the deeper end, submerged the hand that held the small, quivering heap, to the wrist.

For some moments she knelt there and when the tremulous little body grew still, she leaned over to a flower bed and buried it. Laying down the trowel, she rose to her feet and stood wiping her wet hand on her soft muslin apron.

"You do not mind?" he said.

She shook her head. There was a droop to the figure standing with the white folds of her gown falling in straight lines to her feet.

"It is 'peace after pain,' " she said slowly.

There was a rustic bench built under a spreading maple, and she turned and went to it. Sitting down, she leaned her head back against the rough bark of the tree and closed her eyes. The surgeon, standing with one foot on the other end of the bench and leaning on his knee, noted the shadows under the eyes, the faint lines of care around the mouth.

"What of the series?" he asked.

Her eyes opened, wan and shadowy in the dusk now gathering fast under the trees.

"It is about the end," she replied quietly. "The chief is giving in."

"And then?"

The hand that had held the bird under the water till its struggles ceased, closed tensely for a moment and then relaxed.

"And then? Oh, I am arranging for a different line of work—commercial—for a change." She spoke with careful indifference, but he watched her closely as he went on with friendly interest:

"Doesn't pay very well, that sort, does it?"

"Not very—but it will answer——" She paused abruptly, avoiding his eyes, then she swung around and faced him, leaning forward with her two hands on the bench between them.

"The work will not be the same, but I wouldn't mind if you would be—human!" A very passion of weary protest thrilled in the low voice and in the gathering dark her eyes flamed up to his. "I stood it while that bird's little body struggled in my hand under the water, because I knew its hurt would be healed. It meant release from pain. But you—you close the pitiless fingers of your narrowness and your bigotry around me and hold me in torture. I want to go on with my work, whatever it may be, and to be glad. I am content—so more than content!—with just my work and the few around me that I care for. I do not ask glory nor riches nor society nor fashion. They mean nothing to me, because the one great thing means so much more. I want just my work and the moments, now and then, that you give me. They are all that I need—but I do need them terribly. I am a beggar that begs crumbs. And you have no mercy. You make me beg!"

The low voice shook, then it steadied again, sinking still lower.

"Well, be content! You have put my dignity down under your feet and I cannot help myself. But I think even your hard creed teaches something about showing mercy to helpless things!"

She lifted one hand to her throat, then laid her arm along the back of the bench and dropped her head down on it.

"June——!"

For a moment she did not stir. The voice that spoke the name was not the same voice. The slow, undisturbed

calm held for once a note that meant the lifting of a mask, and in answer to it the bowed head raised, and her eyes reached to his eyes in desperate questioning.

"John Orth!" It was just a whisper, and still leaning her left arm on the back of the bench, she slowly raised the other hand and laid its fingers and cupped palm against his face. "John Orth!"

His eyes looked down into the depths of hers steadily, searchingly.

"John——!" The whisper trembled, then with a little broken rush, she cried—"Ah, can't you forget to weigh and measure, and be just human—just yourself!—You cannot deny that you—care, and be honest!"

"I don't want to deny it!"

The words were grimly said, but she drew in her breath sharply and swayed a little forward. And in the shadow he turned.

For this the Way of Pain! For this the long hunger of heart and soul—the crouching of the woman at the foot of the Sphinx, waiting for its sign. For this——

Brow and cheek, the face of John Orth lay against hers. Granite stern, that face: yet now in the chaos of emotions that swirled stormily through her senses, she felt the rarely fine texture of the skin with keenly delicate joy. A long moment—then, her hands in his, she rose to her feet and with the heavy mystery of the night closing round them, shutting the world outside, she lay in his arms, his lips on her lips, while the poignant, maddening sweetness of their warmth pulsed through her body with stinging, exquisite pain. Heart and body and soul—the supreme and wonderful perfectness of that trinity of passion that knows no flaw, swept them together, merged indissolubly while time and memory should be. Heart and body and soul, and lips against lips for a moment

that gods themselves may not surpass—for this they had waited, had paid. And this, only the soft stillness of sleeping hills witnessed. They were alone, and on lip and heart and brain, Life laid the baptismal touch of fire—the divine crucible drip of blood and flame.

CHAPTER FIFTY-ONE

IT was Sunday and there was a flurry of snow in the air as the Vagabonds trooped along the lane to the Ferriss cabin and very audibly took possession of that peaceful domicile for the afternoon and evening.

They were greeted with dubiously raised eyebrows by their hostess and by a whoop of joy from Peter Pan.

"Did you bring a steak or something?" June demanded as they trooped in and gaily discarded snow-flecked wraps. "You look ravenous and I can't fill you all up on one delicate little chicken pie! Why on earth didn't you send word yesterday that you were coming?"

"We didn't know we were till to-day. The Old Man called off this morning's rehearsal after we got to the theatre, so we phoned the rest of the clan to foregather at the depot for the 12:15, and here we are," explained Clara, hugging Peter and biting his tanned throat while he shrieked with delight.

"And I raided old Burnsy at the Press club and threatened to take the stump for another steward if he didn't separate himself from one of his frilliest sirloins," said Orrin Tweed. "But where is the steak?"

"Dicky has it. Where is he? Good Lord!—we haven't lost Dick and all that steak, have we?" cried Huntoon.

"Heavens, I hope not!" cried Mocky nervously. "There are lots of artists, but the Armours are sending meat up into the box-seat class!"

"Dick's all right—he's out making up to Nora. That's why she always gives him the best of everything. Nora is a susceptible female and Richard, like all his craft,

knows enough to stand in with the cook," Mrs. Huntoon called reassuringly.

"Incidentally, who is the Cabaret?" her husband suddenly enquired of the company, and the voice of the Major replied gently: "Me. I am the Cabaret!"

He was busy at the couch, bending over a leather kit-bag that he had brought with him, and with a relieved sigh he extracted several bottles.

" 'Come, fill the c——' "

"Bromide!" a chorus of voices clamoured threateningly. "It has become a state's prison offence to quote that!" Orrin Tweed added. "You can go back to 'Drink to me only with thine eyes' now, Dasc. It's new to this generation."

"I think I feel the premonitory symptoms of a nervous chill," Mr. Huntoon broke in anxiously. "Feel my pulse, June!"

"Yes, you look it," his hostess replied unsympathetically. "Mocky will hold your hand while I fix you some Jamaica Ginger."

"No, no!—don't trouble. I will bear it," said the sufferer heroically. "Unless the Major—just two fingers, perhaps—it might ward off the chill——"

"Sure, an' that chill do be epidemic, I'm thinkin'," Regan put in solemnly. "It's meself that has that same. But not a dhrop more than two fingers, Major dear!"

"And Nora's kitchen only about furnace heat! She must have left the oven door open and the draft blew on you, Dicky," Miss Ferriss commented. "Where's your chill, Orrin?"

"I scorn a subterfuge," the big novelist replied with splendid dignity. "I have no chill, June. The day is beautiful, and your little house is as sunny and warm as the beautiful Southland, and its mistress is as beautiful as her

natal month. No, there is no chill anywhere, that I can discern, and people with chills ought to stay home and not inflict their premonitory symptoms and shakes on other people. But I have a sort of mis'ry around my diaphragm—the doctor says it is from overwork—not dangerous, you understand! But he says just a slight stimulant taken in time will always head off serious trouble."

June shook her head mournfully as she took some little glasses out of a corner cabinet.

"What is your malady, Clara?" she asked. "Mocky, does anybody know how bad you feel?"

"I need," proclaimed the Major, stepping forward gallantly to relieve his hostess of the glasses, "I need neither chills nor premonitory diaphragms, when I am inspired, as now, to drink to the ladies, God bless 'em! Your glasses, gentlemen! Ladies, your slave!"

Mr. Ferriss from his big chair looked on with enjoyment, and rose to his feet with elevated glass that clinked against that of the gallant Southerner in response to the toast.

"Oh, I know, it all sounds well," Mrs. Huntoon remarked dolefully, her chin resting on Peter's golden curls. "But my pennies all go into weighing machines now, and one *crème de menthe* means a three-day fast! So there is no encouragement for me to have chills!"

There was a joyous and noisy dinner served by the delighted and much assisted Nora at mid-afternoon. Regan and Huntoon tied themselves into aprons, made salad dressing, whipped eggs, pulverised coffee for the percolator and otherwise made themselves genuinely useful. Mocky and Clara Sherbourn set the table in the living-room, much hampered by the enthusiastic if mis-

taken zeal of Peter Pan, while June and the rest luxuriously played lotus-eater around the fire-place.

Phone messages from June rounded up Drs. Goethe and Stanley for the evening, and instructed them to pick up Dr. Orth *en route.*

When they arrived June was waiting for them in the doorway, the level rays of the setting sun burnishing the folds of her wool gown to silver. Dr. Stanley touched her shoulder with an affectionate pat as she passed into the house to a chorus of greetings. The two men uncovered as they approached the step and Dr. Goethe bent over June's right hand with old-fashioned and stately courtesy.

Laughingly she extended her left to Dr. Orth and taking it in his, he stood looking up at the warmly radiant picture she made, framed by the brilliant crimson and gold of the autumn leaves. The eyes that met and answered his were luminous and tender and they greeted him with the exquisite *camaraderie* that makes the long, sweet silence of an exchanged look so richly eloquent. Through their interlaced fingers he felt the quickening beat of answering pulses, the wine-sharp magic that life can know through love only.

In response to gay calls from the Vagabonds, Dr. Goethe went into the house, leaving them alone for one of those inexpressibly precious moments that are each a Taj Mahal jewel of that jewelled shrine-wonder that love builded to Love, immortalising the perfection that may be.

In the red-gold splendour that streamed down on them from the hills she bent over him.

"Are you a mendicant? Do you ask alms, sir stranger?" she whispered, eyes and lips alight with laughter. "Beg what you will and it shall be yours.

For I am rich——" Their clasped hands tightened, and through answering smiles the lambent flame of remembered moments played warmly and silently as golden auroras. Weighted with the wonder-sweetness of it, her whisper touched his bruised spirit with the yearning tenderness of a love that gave its all freely, gladly, content with just love's recognition.

"And how will it all end?" he said slowly, the heavy shadow of long denial touching his eyes as they drew from hers the strange and vivid strength that was so new and wonderful. "How is it going to end?"

He saw her head lift with the quick fear of forest things, then the spirit of her looked bravely back into his eyes.

"I don't know—I don't know——" she answered as slowly. "But for these, our moments, I am so grateful. Ah, my dearest, how many in this sorry world have known this that Life has given us at last! And if it give, and then take away again, still—don't you see?—I am the richest woman in the world! For all of the world's gold cannot buy—just this!"

She looked down at the hands that held hers—the skilled, quiet hands that were so characteristic of him, and that she had held against her lips while through her mind something read years ago passed brokenly:

"Along each knotted cord and vein
I trace the varying chart of years,
The long, long journey and the pain,
The weight of Atlas—and the tears——"

The mute eloquence of hands that all through life give, give—where those given give nothing back again; of hands that guard and lift and sustain through long

relentless years; that learn the curved quiescence of emptiness, the stillness that no longer expects, the slow pressing of palm upon palm in dumb submission to all things! The sorrowfulness of it caught at her throat.

"Dear hands!—most dear and so patient hands! They have given to me the great gift. And if God take them from me again, still His mercy leaves the gift with me for always. To have been blest—should we not be grateful for that?"

Her eyes shone through tears, her mouth trembled in its smiling, but the glory of those who have striven for the high peaks and glimpsed their ineffable white light, was in her face.

"And the times there seemed to be only one's self and God," he said, gravely musing. "When one came face to face with the soul's vast loneliness!"

"It is the soul's probation," she answered him gently. "And for those who are patient and wait, the answer comes at last."

Reluctantly their hands drew apart, but the light in her face was in his as they entered the cabin and were swept into the gay storm of badinage and scoffing that flicked their wits to action with silk whips and that was the language by which Vagabondia clothed in sparkling and saucy Harlequinade its deep affection for its clan.

With the happy Peter flat on his back on the floor before the fire were several of his adorers sitting tailor-fashion around him, while they roasted chestnuts and marshmallows. The rest occupied the roomy couch and easy chairs, the men contentedly smoking their post-prandial cigars.

June, curled among the couch cushions and with her face in the shadow, lazily listened and watched the expressive faces over which the firelight played. With a

word or two she steered the laughing chatter into reminiscences drolly funny, and told with the inimitable cleverness that is only at its best when the trained *raconteur* is in the private and charmed circle of his "ain people." When they were well started—story suggesting story, and tales of desperate experiences seen through eyes always able to extract something humorous from the worst and most hopeless—she herself was silent, while she watched Orth intently.

At first he leaned back in his big chair, his gaze following the smoke of his cigar through half-closed lids, his face haggard in the flickering light. But soon the deeply ploughed lines relaxed and a shimmer of amusement softened the stern face and at last reached the eyes—eyes that to June always suggested the baffling earth-grey jade. A ringing shout of laughter that followed a piece of Huntoon's drollery, surprised the surgeon into laughter as spontaneous as it was rare, and the woman on the couch, watching from her shadowed corner with eyes jealously glad, pressed her clasped hands tightly against her breast. A wave of passionate gratitude swept warmly over her—they had made him laugh, these breezy, clever vagabonds who were her people! With the wonderful magic of their art and their genius they had touched the opaque, brooding eyes and had surprised them into the pellucid laughter of youth. The years and their weariness had fallen from him, and through the heavy mantle of his dignities and the heavy shadow of his burdens, the impish enjoyment of the boy looked out in mischievous appreciation of the actor's lawless but irresistible fascination.

"I told you he could talk himself out of jail," Tweed was saying gravely. "By rights he should be there now, but the judges who ought to fine him make the

mistake of giving him a hearing. And by the time he has been heard ten minutes they are ready to borrow money from the Sheriff and lend it to him."

How young and wonderfully winning the smiling face now looked!

"If it could be so always—boy!—boy!"

The cry beat against her lips with the desperate longing of a prayer. It was the boy imprisoned behind the mask of stone, as were the boys in mill and factory, that she had battled for. And it was the boy-soul of him that now looked out, off-guard and idly happy, that she had searched for and had appealed to her gods for.

The thick hair was silvered around his temples; the mouth, silent and terribly patient, was set in iron sternness and self-repression. But she had called upon Vagabondia to come to her aid and it had trooped gaily across the grey vista of Duty, shattering its grimness with saucy quip and bubbling laughter, and waking the Boy to the joyousness of freedom for a little hour.

When they were all leaving, Mr. Ferriss detained the surgeon for a few minutes in his room. June, a white shawl twisted around her shoulders, was at the gate when he came out. The voices of the gay party straggling up the lane floated back on the still, frosty air, and June's lips were smiling as she turned to him with a package of paper.

"Your own matter—it is almost the last!—and a little 'story,' Eminence."

The night was dark, ragged clouds hiding the stars, but in the dimness he looked down into eyes that were wistfully tender.

"Your vagabonds are a tonic," he smiled as Dicky Regan yodelled back to him and Mocky Hazleton trilled

an echo. "I have forgotten that hospitals exist. And you—you look tired. Rest for a little. Stop trying to be strong and just let things drift a bit!"

Their hands—the left—met palm to palm, and then slipped to the wrist. She nodded assent.

"I will," she promised. "Say 'I do.' "

Her heart thrilled again in its passionate gratitude to her brethren of Bohemia, as she saw the boy-laughter glint in his eyes.

"I do," he responded with great gravity.

"June Ferriss, I do," she amended in a whisper, and his eyes grew tender, his voice infinitely gentle.

"June Ferriss, I do!"

Leaning against the whitewashed post of the little gate, she lifted the clasped hands against her cheek. Then with her finger-tips she found the pulse-beat and counted the small trip-hammer as it lifted and fell, lifted and fell——.

"See how just the tip of my finger quite covers that faint pulsation. And yet the beginning and end of life—its meaning, and its hope, and its God, for me—are all held there. That is my territory, John Orth!"

Lifting her finger, she pressed her lips to the wrist. "Do you remember the little barley-cake of Browning's 'Aurora Leigh'? How you have made me battle for my barley-cake! Poor Weelum and his lost pride, and poor me and my lost dignity! Do you know that no one should ever say with assurance—'I would never do so and so!' Life has a sardonic humour of its own and makes us some day eat our words."

She laughed softly, with a little resigned shrug of her shoulders, and bent her head, her cheek in the palm of his hand. His fingers curved under her chin with

gentle pressure for a moment, then she lifted her head and stepped back.

As the surgeon went up the lane through the black shadows of the trees June Ferriss rested her arms on the post and looked at the ragged clouds, torn here and there to let a star glimmer through.

So through storms she had sought the lode-star, refusing any lesser light. The storms had been many, leaving her weary and spent. She had gone out from the safely hedged life of the people of her own kind, and had given up its ease and luxury for the grim and heart-breaking battle for bread. She had learned what life meant to women where pain pressed the iron into the soul while labour pressed its yoke on galled shoulders. She had heard, as those women hear through nights long and black and bitter, the coldly practical "What's the use?" that distils its weakening acid in hearts hungering for comfort and minds weary of conflict. She had walked their Via Dolorosa as one of them—she had seen them here and there falter and stumble away to an easier path, sanctioned or unsanctioned by society, but in both cases at the price of shamed womanhood.

And the primal and terrible passions of man had caught at her with their talon fingers. When exhaustion made sleep broken and fitful she would waken with a numbing pain in her left arm where the cold body of the dead baby seemed to be crushing it. The blackness of that night would sweep over her and the fearful, inexpressible fear that surrounds the taking of a life with such grisly and mysterious horror, would bring the beads of sweat around her lips and on her temples.

This, the atavistic superstition of past generations, she would battle with, calling up the forces that her brain recognised and respected to rout the ghosts born of dark-

ness and over-taxed nerves. But it meant a battle, and it meant greeting the day of labour with sick distaste of life and its ingeniously cruel forms of torment. Labour and the tired limbs of labour she could understand. There was a certain rough nobility in earning with hands and brains the daily bread.

But the torturing of the creature that toiled without protest toward a goal concealed and uncertain, seemed merely cruel. If meant to be discipline, it was both erratic and futile! The individual was pitched into life like a blind puppy into a pond, to sink or swim as it could. Its characteristics, good, bad or indifferent, were inborn, its virtues or vices instinctive. Why should it be rewarded for being good or punished for being bad? Does the Madonna type of woman know anything of her little thieving-fox sister of the slum, steeped in red sins from birth?

There seemed to be little justice and less logic in the scheme of things, but June Ferriss had groped her way through fogs that blinded and brambles that tore, with always the passionate desire drawing her on—to care! Just to care once to the full of brain and spirit and body! It would mean the perfectness that would be an earnest of the Plan back of the chaos, the Compassion back of the crucible.

The child gave her instinct of motherhood new vitality to battle for the children who needed it, but its birth had as little effect upon the course her feet followed as the fitful breeze that swayed the bare branches of the trees.

Deep within her life was a temple to which her soul withdrew from the hurt of life, from its confusion and turmoil. There it could creep, as to sanctuary, to burn its candles before the hidden Host in wordless patience,

as in wordless prayer. To care—to know that she could care to the core of her being, let the price be what it would—this she had asked. And through her clouded girlhood and all that had followed, she had held to this, as the pilgrim, dusty and footsore, passes the cool groves and laughing idlers, with his eyes and face turned always to the Mecca he cannot see.

The way had led to this man, son of stern Puritans, reared in a rigid and narrow school that lived up to the most pitiless letter of harsh Mosaic code.

And against this Puritanism she had bruised protesting arms, battling at last for that which would repay all that she had suffered—that could give in a golden moment that for which she had renounced everything.

To his soul, hers had called with sudden, wonderful recognition, and he had heard and answered. But her Mecca was not yet!—and the Puritanism of his fathers had beaten her with whips, seven-thonged, while her faith made its last stand with arms out-flung to shield the white temple and its prayer.

Leaning against the little gate-post, June Ferriss lifted her face to the cold wind. Through the scudding spindrift of clouds, a serene, perfect star glowed in wonderful purity. So through the storm had this man's soul found and lifted hers for one perfect moment, free of the World that imprisoned and Life that crucified, and with his lips against hers, the star of a god had risen and burned whitely.

Heart and body and spirit—the perfectness that she had prayed for—had answered to his, as her lips had answered to his lips. Her brain swam now at the remembered poignant sweetness of it—the warmth of his arms that were the Heaven she had dreamed of—of his face as it leaned against her cheek—of his lips as they found

hers——. For this she had lived her "thousand years of torment."

"And whatever the price, I will pay—beloved!—my beloved!—I will pay!"

The great star burning high in the roof of the night filled her eyes with its glory. Then the cloud-wrack closed over it. But she smiled up at the coming storm—the dreaming smile of lips that have touched the holy wine of Love's Grail—and as she had guarded the Temple where prayed her desire, so now she stretched out her arms and faced the night and the wind that whipped her white draperies around her.

"It was my moment!" her soul cried to the great Void. "God gave. And not even God Himself may re-roll the Scroll. For time and eternity—it is mine!"

CHAPTER FIFTY-TWO

IN his study, silent as the silent house, John Orth read the thin sheets, closely written, that were enclosed in the package of translations. A woman lay sleeping a heavy sleep in a near-by room, and her stertorous breathing had reached him till he closed the door leading to his own wing of the house.

Now, in the utter stillness of the large, severe looking room, with its sombre book-cases of walnut and its scientific paraphernalia, he seemed to hear the approach of light child-feet and to feel a quiet little figure move close against his elbow. Suppose that she had lived and given battle to the forces of life for the love that should mean Love in the highest, as had the woman he had left facing the night and the coming storm with a glory in her eyes! What then? The child had loved him wholly and supremely, and his displeasure had spelled tragedy and death for her. So the woman had loved him, wholly and supremely, reaching pitiful hands to draw him back from the pit of despair, calling to his love to build life anew for Love's dear sake.

Under her watchful and careful tenderness the devils of remorse had at last let go. Under the sharp whip of her logic they had slunk back into the troubled shadows of things past. And a warmth, new and wonderful, had stolen through his chilled veins, to summon him to effort, to the insistent claim of things to come.

His faith—the faith of his fathers—had failed him, after all. In the hour of his agony it had been a stone, comfortless and cold. But she, pagan and unafraid, had

spurned code and creed and had looked, level-eyed, to the Throne itself, to verify its promise that to those who loved and believed, Love itself would speak.

Well, Love had spoken. Out of a Hell, dumb and terrible, it had called him. And in this woman's eyes, weary but illumined, was the demand upon his faith for courage to believe in, and await, the "after."

He read:

You, who have faith, say "Sometime we will have what we have wanted here——" And to you—you, who are my faith!—the tired mind beats always its muted "I wonder—I wonder——"

That hospital down there with its gamut of human stories—and you, the man and mind behind it all, with lips locked, while yet the very walls carry to me what you do and are and bear—you are the least real when fear steps in, as you are the only thing that is real when my fingers close on the small, steady pulse-beat that spells out to me what Life and God may mean in your "sometime."

Those who have known all my past years and their story, and are part of it and so are part of me—they are slipping from me with terrible regularity. All that had been just part of the general mystery and pain of things, and I looked at the black curtain that hid the Author with merely wonder—until now. And now you have done what neither man nor God had done—you have made me afraid.

I have no faith, no belief. I can only hold my fragments to my breast and face Immutability that rims a desert. The Cross I have known only by its weight, never by its exaltation—prayer but as a refuge for timid women and a dying priesthood. The Beyond neither offered nor held a Heaven. I did not want Sentiment.

I wanted—I have always wanted—you. But I am a part of the new order of things—you are sternly of the old. I oppose what you uphold, and I have suffered as they must suffer who differ with the majority. And now I look back through your eyes and for the first time care to justify myself—and for the first time wonder if I can!

Do you see what your possible "sometime" means?—how, in battling with your orthodoxy as I have done, I have battled, not for my theory, but for myself!

Would you in that "sometime" honour the intent?—or look with eyes that condemned on the broken work that had striven in new ways for perfection! The old way had been safer, but for me it would not have been honest. What it has cost me, you could not know. What would repay me, you and your "sometime" hold. This is the inter-time of spent waiting for the star, or perhaps for just the dark.

And so I am afraid. I have nothing to reassure. I can see neither goal nor God, and I am afraid of Him and His hidden plan because—and only because—it means you.

To buy you and your Heaven I would not change what I have taught. But I am wondering if the price I have paid, heavy as it has been, is enough—the edge of things is so close—the few more years of servitude and tiredness so soon over—and you, ah, grave and sweet!—God's recompense?—or the further death on death!

You from your cliffs, wide and open and bleak, I from the tortuous turning and doubling of the harried animal—you from the Book, explicit and uncompromising, I from shifting Life, fluid and complex and burdened—can we ever meet on common ground? Knowing all would you understand all, I wonder? If the girl-dreams were of castle walls reaching in white tracery to the

stars, can you say to the woman—"Because of them, give me the broken pieces and we will line a little pool for the spring to fill beside the road, for the traveller and the birds!"

Beloved, beloved!—it is the little pool beside the road that is all my possessions! What I do and am, are but you and what beats against my lips and aches in my breast made articulate. That the long way of pain that broke my courage and my body, led at last to you—that the weary dissonance was in the end crossed and stilled by your voice—that the eyes that had seen too much, turning in sick shrinking from it all, rested on you, God's gentleman—all this is the wonder that I watch with held breath. You, the still man of immeasurable patience and infinite endurance, strong and sure as the cliff that meets the storm with immovable shoulder and thrusts it back, silent as the cliff is silent through turmoil of petrel and surf and gale—you, as you have been against the tangled tapestry of what went before, and of what is around you —I love you with what men call worship, not knowing then the height and depth and breadth of all the word means. I love you with a love all human in its cries that are stifled in every heart-beat—with a love that yet touches the hem of Holy Things.

When he had read, he sat a long time motionless. Then in his quietly deliberate way he folded the written sheets carefully and opened the door of a safe concealed behind a panel of the big desk. He laid the paper in a pigeon-hole and opening a smaller door, took out a little plain gold ring, the size a child would wear.

It was the first ring he had given her and on an odd impulse he had drawn it from her finger just before they had fastened down the coffin lid. She had other

rings, with small jewels, pearls and turquoise, given her by relatives and friends, which she wore or discarded as the whim moved her. But this plain little ring which had been what his taste had selected, she had worn always. And so because it had been so a part of her, he had kept it, when they had carried from him the little tenement of the child-soul.

The next night when he left the hospital he went down the lane toward where the mellow gleam of a lamp streamed out from the Ferriss cabin. June had finished her work for the evening, but was standing looking into the fire as he dropped the knocker softly and opened the door.

She did not speak, but her hands met his with the tense eloquence that told of the ever-present longing and terror that marked each meeting that came and passed. Would another meeting come?—and having come, would it be the last?

"John!—John!—John Orth!"

There was a very passion of thankfulness in the breathed words and it brought an answering light in his wearily stern face that softened it wonderfully.

With her hands in his, he slipped the ring on the little finger of her left hand. "It was—hers," he said simply.

CHAPTER FIFTY-THREE

THE winter of commercial work was a heavy strain. It was necessary to treble her actual out-put of drawing, which was now mechanical and steady, nerve-wearing grind, to just keep the pot boiling.

But in the inner temple that had waited so long, now burned a little lamp fed with divine oil. And when the yoke pressed hard, when the body trembled and gave under the strain of mingled pain and labour, her soul turned to the flame that illumined, for her, a Heaven.

Mr. Ferriss improved steadily, and as the winter waned his old strength and mental activity surged back and he began to chafe to get into harness.

"There is June's robin, Kate," he said one day to the doctor, as he stood in the open doorway. "The ice has broken in the brook, Bobby is back, spring has come and I am declaring myself. No more petticoat government! Bruce, Prentice and Bruce are offering to make it Bruce, Prentiss and Ferriss—senior wants to retire—and I decline to be mollycoddled by you female women and bullied by Orth any longer."

"Mercy me! Ain't he reel dangerous, though!" Dr. Stanley murmured to June in awe-stricken tones. "Feelin' your oats, Jimmy Ferriss? Going down to Washington to tell the President how he has mismanaged things during your period of retirement?"

"You'll see!"

Mr. Ferriss nodded with deep mystery and deeper resolve.

"Well, I would wait for the next car, anyhow, dad,"

his daughter advised tranquilly. "The President can stand it a day or two longer. Keep your eye on Peter, Kate. He won't come in while the squirrels are there with him, and I want to help Nora with the dinner."

The doctor buttoned up her loose sack coat and sauntered out to the path where she could watch Peter Pan and also the sun setting in a blaze of orange and crimson behind the hills. Ferriss pulled his heavy military cape further over his shoulders and joined her.

"So you are tired of us?" she said to him curtly.

Ferriss shook his head gravely. "No," he replied. "I am not tired. But I am wakening out of a sleep. And I am practically well again. June insists on going on with her work, but she will be able to take it easier and drop the grind. She is going to 'batch it' with Peter Pan. And she says I can't have Nora."

"She is going to—— What on earth are you talking about?"

The doctor wheeled from the sunset, her shrewd eyes opening in astonishment behind her glasses as she faced the man beside her.

"Why—just that," Mr. Ferriss said, meekly explanatory. "June says she is going to cut loose and enjoy herself for awhile, and that I can have a Jap—and you."

"Me?"

"Yes. You see," explained Mr. Ferriss patiently. "She knows I want you, and thinks if she sends me adrift you will feel properly indignant and sorry, and will give up your nice practice here and marry me. Will you, Kate?"

The whimsical voice became very earnest as he moved close to her side and looked down at her.

"I am starting in again a poor man and much in debt to that daughter of mine, who weathered the storm for

the two of us. But it won't take long to rebuild—a better and finer life, Kate, if you care enough for me. Kate!"

"Daddy Jim is kissin' Aunt Kate," was the information that brought June, her eyes dancing, to the door.

"And of course my son could have been heels up in the brook, and you two none the wiser!" she informed the guilt-stricken pair from the doorway. "Have you promised to be my gentle and obedient step-mother, Katrinka Stanley?"

The doctor looked around one shoulder of the military cape at June, and then at her offspring, who was like an overgrown robin in his scarlet sweater.

"Do I have to grandmother Peter?" she parried.

"Indeed, you do," June assured her cheerfully. "Take your medicine and settle down to your knitting. And you'll have to stop flirting with Carl Goethe. I'm afraid he will call you out, Jimmy! And your law trickeries won't get you out of a German duel so easily, let me tell you."

Peter interrupted, planting himself on the path with sturdy little legs outstretched and an upraised face of deep interest.

"Kiss her again, daddy Jim," he commanded. And Mr. Ferriss, with gallant and happy willingness, obeyed.

A week later June was in the City, a guest at the Keith home. Her hostess, who had been her room-mate at college, was in high feather because of the coming Ferriss-Stanley wedding and the "return to Jerusalem."

"Why, it has been like the Babylonian exile, June Ferriss," she cried. She was in negligee, curled up in a *chaise-longue* in her dressing room. June had taken

possession of the couch and four cushions and was sipping tea appreciatively. "It will be simply ripping to have you and Dad Ferriss in our midst once more, and Kate Stanley is a breeze. That marriage will be simply ideal."

June's eyes grew very tender.

"It will be ideal! Kate has worked like a Trojan at her practice and the dad's life has been all awry. Now they have come into their own!"

"You're going to batch?"

June nodded.

"Yes, indeedy! The bliss of turtle-doves is not a thing to indulge in vicariously! I refuse to be an innocent bystander."

"Well, they will have to be uptown, near us," Mrs. Keith decided contentedly. "And you will be somewhere close, won't you?"

"I will not," said Miss Ferriss placidly. "I have no intention of going back to the swim, Toots. I am a hard-working female and expect to continue till I get rheumatiz in my joints. The butterfly life 'likes me not,' honey."

Laying down her tea-cup, she frankly closed her eyes and relaxed comfortably on the cushions while her hostess indignantly lectured and tearfully protested. She did not argue, but she knew that for her there was no return to idleness. She had eaten of the pomegranate, and the heart of the world had opened to her and had shown her secrets dark and terrible. Out of those depths she could never return to the pretty make-believes of society, the shallow round of shallow pleasures and still shallower duties.

For her the lighter interests and amusements had been burned away. In others, she looked upon them with eyes of tranquil tolerance and utter indifference. They had

once made up her life; but she had laid them aside as she had laid the toys of her childhood, the vanities of her girlhood, to take up the stern realities that had drained the roses and laughter from her face, to leave there, instead, the saddened shadows of Knowledge.

While Mrs. Keith expostulated, she was looking back to the cabin on the hill, to the shaded lamp and the still man who looked down at her with brooding, terribly patient eyes. The long years of silent endurance, the sudden tragedy, had done their work and he was breaking down. He had turned deaf ears to brother physicians and friends, and they were watching him steadily fail with miserable and impotent rebellion.

And she—the iron fingers of fear that held her heart were closing daily, hourly, as she dumbly watched and suffered.

Was that, too, to be part of the price? Out of that love, built up of long endurance and pain, to turn to the trumpery pastimes of those whose labour was pleasure-seeking!

Her wrist was across her eyes and her clenched teeth held back the animal moan of sheer suffering that seemed as though it must suffocate her. Mrs. Keith was babbling of the City—of its spell that would call her back to old days and delights. And she was looking at the City and its vast emptiness that awaited her, when the slow revolving wheels of Circumstance would carry her away from the hills and her Desire—back to city canyons and desolation!

"Senator Rutherford will take you in—he was your grandfather's *protégé,* you remember? He came up from Washington yesterday with that nice Sturm boy, *attaché* of the German legation. He is coming to dinner, too. And the Vances are coming, and Fred Vaughn and Leila

Bellair—she came out this winter, and will have all the Bellair money, and Freddy is in love with her. But she wants a title. Well, she can buy the strawberry leaves with what she has, and Freddy has only his football shoulders and white teeth—not enough for the price these days. The girls are all bargain hunters!"

The light babble was still around her at the table and she heard herself joining in with easy naturalness. She had yielded to her old room-mate's urgent entreaties with a sudden craving for the froth and nonsense that might bring temporary forgetfulness of the fear that gnawed with cold teeth in her breast. She was helpless, and the inaction and dread that must be hidden from observant eyes was telling upon her cruelly. The dinner was to have given her an hour's respite, but it had not done so, and while she forced herself to talk and laugh, her thought was straining back anxiously to the quiet settlement among the hills, the hospital with its hourly gamble of life and death, and the silent man whose skill held death at bay.

"I was so glad to hear of your father's recovery," Senator Rutherford was saying to her, when she desperately drew her thought back to the people and voices around her. "You know I am under very deep obligation to him because of Judge Ferriss. My mother had been the Judge's first sweetheart—there was quite a romance of Colonial days there, I understand. And the Judge sort of foster-fathered me when I was a cub, staked me for college and then taught me law."

"I know—the dad always looked up to you with admiring awe. You had begun to practise when he was a freshman and your rapid rise made you a hero in his eyes!"

June smiled as she turned to the distinguished look-

ing statesman—a handsome man with keen black eyes and snow-white hair. He smiled in return, but there was a note of sincere concern in his voice as he replied.

"But I have been able to do absolutely nothing to make my obligation rest a little easier on my conscience! I could influence an appointment now, had he only gone in for medicine instead of the law, that would give him a round-the-globe trip on a certain line of scientific investigation required by the Herkemer Foundation. The trip will carry with it the *entrée* to the laboratories of the Old World and give access to their most valuable scientific discoveries. It would mean about a year of interesting observation and restful travel, and would have done your father so much good."

The pleasantly modulated voice drifted easily on while the Senator attended to the successive courses of an enjoyably prolonged dinner. But in the softly tempered light of the shaded candles, the woman beside him was sitting tensely still, her head slightly bent, unseeing eyes fixed on the roses lying like a crimson pool in the centre of the mahogany.

She no longer heard the voices around the table. The iron fingers around her heart had closed in a sudden, agonising grip and she seemed conscious of a woman face down somewhere crying, "No, no—not that——!"

But when she spoke her voice was quite even and she heard its calm tones with a dreary sort of impersonal wonder.

"Would it be possible to carry that sense of obligation that seems to trouble you, on to the third generation, Senator?"

"You mean——?"

The man beside her turned quickly and regarded her

with interest. She smiled and raised her eyebrows with quizzical enquiry.

"I mean—would you permit the daughter of the son of your preceptor to name the appointee?" Her smile faded to sudden pale gravity and her eyes, grown strained and wan, met his full. "I mean the surgeon to whose skill I owe my father's recovery."

"Dr. John Orth?——" The statesman knitted his brows and stared at his group of wineglasses, thinking quickly. Under cover of the white laces of her gown, she pressed her left hand against her side where the old pain stabbed pitilessly.

Senator Rutherford nodded thoughtfully.

"A remarkable man. If he will accept, I know of no one better fitted for the post. Yes, Miss June, I will be very glad indeed to name your appointee, and in naming Dr. Orth I will be doing the Foundation an honour. If he can only be secured, he will be of invaluable service."

There was a pleased warmth in the stately old senator's voice, and June responded with careful interest through the serving of the remaining courses of a dinner now grown interminable.

The Foundation wished the mission undertaken at the earliest possible date, there was everything to be gained by a man of scientific pursuits, it would be madness from every point of view for him to decline, and while the long, laughter- and music-filled evening dragged to its close, June was conscious of the desperate, strangled "No, no—not that!" beating up to her throat in increasing protest till, behind her locked door, she stood swaying at last with her twisted fingers pressed against her lips and under closed lids the hot tears scorching her eyes—tears that seared and scarred as they were driven back to the sick heart.

An odd little play she had once seen was built around a verse that now seemed to throb in the silent night around her——

"Some measure love by gold——
Some by boundless sea.
I love you well enough to leave you, dear,
If needs must be!"

And she loved him well enough to leave him, to put the width of the world between them. And when the other side of the world gave him back—if it did!—she would be gone. The City would have claimed her and their lives would be as far apart as the poles.

"Not yet——!" the human side of her was crying with desperate pleading for time, for respite. But the soul of her was giving him up with supreme finality, finding the justification of its love in that love's supreme renunciation.

CHAPTER FIFTY-FOUR

WITHIN a week she heard from Dr. Goethe of the appointment tendered the surgeon and of his apathy.

"He is a very sick man and he will die if he cannot be roused," the big, worried German exclaimed, storming up and down the floor of the little cabin and pulling up his sleeves, as was his wont when a complicated case called to his fighting blood. "To get away for a year will bring him back to us with his powers trebled. We need him. We must have him. I want to take him by force—with handcuffs. I plead! I scold! Yah! He looks at me and is silent. You cannot argue with a silent man. You can only beat him. It may be yet that I will beat him!"

The doctor stormed angrily away and the woman, left alone, stood in the middle of the room with her face in her hands. Her task was not yet done! Heartsick, cowering as she was before the vast desolation that was moving slowly and inexorably toward her, she must still fight for that which would shorten the time. Cowardice whispered, "What need?" Why not hoard the golden days and drift with the tide? Why rob her heart of that upon which it now lived so richly and wonderfully—why hasten the day of its beggary and insuperable pain! And for what? For only a chance, after all—the chance that would bring him back to a world that would no longer be her world.

She moved draggingly to the desk, then stood there with her hand on her throat. She was wondering what

new form of torture Life could still invent! The long, long way of pain had led to her moment—and then to this. To her moment——!

Her head lifted, and startled at the sudden reminder, she pressed the hand with its little strip of gold hard against her lips. She had agreed to pay——!

She wrote far into the night, mercilessly swinging the knout of accusation and denunciation over him, sparing him nothing that might cut through the heavy lethargy that enveloped and stupefied him with its miasmic fumes:—

The mind that is both broad and conscientious sometimes misses the obvious. You have striven for a difficult thing, for the expression of an ideal as impractical as it is extreme. It is the ideal of the ascetic, of the flagellant—the unhealthy growth of cloister damp and chill. It is rooted in dead years and forgotten laws. It kills life's blossoms and colour—it hangs lifeless as the grey mosses of Southern swamps, swinging like the hair of dead women whose hearts had broken. To this impossible ideal you have offered up your own body and heart—a very terrible price for an empty and untenable theory.

You entered into a contract, once upon a time, in good faith. That contract has been dishonoured and destroyed. Man-instituted and Man-authorised, you have still clung to the letter of it, when outraged Nature herself has risen and branded it unholy. It has drained the blood from your veins and will give to the Earth a corpse, while Life cries aloud for men. Is that what your God means in His divine economy? Do you think the world will be better and happier because of this immense sacrifice for a dry gourd? Whom do you benefit? Does the fast-

ing monk, grown drunk on his own fanaticism, minister to the world? Do you, the priest, or I, the pagan—you, the martyr, or I, the fighter, help the more, where help and guidance are needed!

Once I, too, was dying, my strength was sapped, and I whipped my body up to its feet and into harness. I had neither your creed nor your God to teach me Duty, but my gods of the winds and waves and of freedom pointed to where work meant more than prayer. I had not your altar calling for sacrifice and offering blood-money in harp and crown, but I laid my body and its pain down for a bridge for timid and uncertain feet to pass over, to surer ways and clearer paths.

We are not pawns, you and I. We are of those few who move lives we touch, for good or ill. We are the players of the game, in a world of flesh and blood and hearts and souls. And the lives are black as well as white, that I reach. Are they not His? Or would He honour you more for sinking into lethargy and death as you are doing under a miasmic law, spawned into being when property wedded expediency?

Whom God hath joined together no man *can* put asunder. And the adultery of soul is what has called down the thunders of Sinai—the adultery that Man and Expediency have called law, that they have dared attribute to a clean God and that has brought the church rotting and crumbling around their feet.

The seed of those who burned witches to the glory of the God of Love gave you birth, but your brain has battled up through their blood-lust to a day scientific and sane. You have looked into the eyes of Truth, grave and terrible and accusing, and you have read there that Life is large, its need appalling—that Duty is colossal. Your little walled garden no longer limits your intel-

ligence—your little majolica idols are overturned. *You know.*

But you are tired—tired to the core. So you pull the rags of your religion around you and shut your eyes to the terrible, nude Truth, and drift.

And I cannot, you see. I have met Pan face to face. And the legend teaches that to see him is to go mad or die or see all the sorrow of the world. And my brain keeps sane and my body obedient to the whip and so I must go on. And all the sorrow of all the world distils its acid in slow tears in my heart as each day passes. I, too, am tired—tired to the core. But I cannot drift. I must know the sorrow and add it to my own weariness and keep back with a smile the very human "How long, O, God——!" And as refinement upon refinement of pain, I must watch you going out with the tide—going on to where wait the Delectable Isles, my dear!—slipping your wrists out of the fetters, not to work with me, as you have done, but to escape from it all—while I go on and do my work alone.

I, with my Epicurean absence of fear, with my Epicurean appreciation of the little liqueur glass of liquid that would so gently and graciously give the Solution and its benison of great peace—oddly enough am held to the yoke by my heathen deities where your Christus fails. A poor commentary on the Cross and its Lesson—on the pierced Feet and their Story!

You have demonstrated that a starved and imprisoned life means death—as a plant without sunlight or warmth dies. But you take unction to your soul that suicide passive is not sin. You lash a dead belief to your back, as they lashed dead and living prisoners together of old, and you ticket it Duty, knowing all the while that it means escape. I am not clever in Jesuitical subtleties.

For me there is but the road, long and dusty and thorn-hedged.

Do you think your God will be less blind than your little world of people who watch you in futile protest? Do you think that He, as they, cannot see that you are simply sick of things and prefer getting out to taking action? With all your splendid powers and possibilities you deliberately and knowingly lay down your life as though it were a worthless thing, for an idea that would be monstrous were it not farcical. Do you think your Calvinistic and obsolete excuses will appeal to inexorable Intelligence? Will your record match mine, after all, in the final summing up?

I have been grateful to Life for giving me just the fragments of the last year. To look past other eyes and meet the flash of understanding in yours—to feel the strength that flowed as wine from clasped fingers to wrist—that has been largesse from a Throne of Mercy for which my very soul has knelt and given thanks. With the fragments I was content and was more than content to work. What you gave, I gave out again ten-fold to others. And to go on working, so, was my prayer.

But over this you are drawing the abomination of desolation. For you await the Delectable Isles, but as you go on to them you are killing by inches the heart in a body that must go on living. I am helpless, and I am suffering as I would not permit an animal that loved me to suffer. For I am tied—tied——! For you the drifting and the quiet shadows—but for me, the work and the dead thing in my breast that tortures and clamours for burial.

The brutality of every phase of it—the unfathomable pain and loneliness that stretch out and blacken the

horizon from edge to edge, the darkness that aches and aches and knows neither star nor dawn, the appalling hunger of heart and mind and soul—have you any faintest conception of this Hell that you are building around me with the hands yet warm from my lips! Have the people who need you and trust you—the woman who, through you, saw Love in the Highest, no claim? They ask of you only that you live and help them to, in turn, serve you—only that! Is it so much they ask——! poor people and poor woman!

Ah, I love you so!—I love you so! And you are crucifying that love head downward on a cross! I love you with every breath that chokes in my throat and that sands my lips as the air thickens around me with new fear and more bitter hopelessness. I have bought my "fragments" with such a price—with pain and tragedy and poverty and labour—and I was so grateful for this great and wonderful thing that came as a Voice that reassured and comforted. It was my reconciliation with One misunderstood. And of Pain was born a great sweetness and great peace. And now to turn from this to chaos—beloved! beloved! be merciful!

CHAPTER FIFTY-FIVE

TWO days passed—"crawled like a weed-clogged wave." Matters in the mill district claimed every moment she could give from her work, but while she mechanically busied mind and body, her spirit seemed a thing apart. There was the old, uncanny sense of dual personality—of another woman aloof and tense, clinging to a rock and facing the whips of the storm while she strained every nerve to listen.

The mill-folk were not the plaintive sad-eyed characters of favourite magazine stories. The "little mothers" with their crying children clinging to their skirts, so familiar in the newspapers, were mostly sullen and generally slattern and the children felt the weight of a heavy hand when their cries became annoying. June Ferriss had little patience with the "Lady Bountiful" rôle, but while helping the women through crises that found them terror-stricken and helpless, she was enabled to whip up the pride, active or latent in every woman's heart, that she found more practical and lasting in its results than anything moral teaching could reach.

Pride of appearance and of the house—this she used as the leaven that worked up and around to better things. And in the gradual improvement of the mill homes she found a satisfaction that did not cavil at methods. Respectable bodies were a healthful stimulus to respectable minds, and when she had induced a woman to do her hair becomingly and get something white around her throat, she was reasonably certain that the rest would follow.

"When are you going to have Tommy's throat oper-

ated on? He would be a youngster you could be proud of if he could keep his mouth closed, Sally!"—this to Mrs. Perkins, mother of five.

"Do ye say now, Miss June! An' Tommy do look like his pa did—a fine, strappin' lad he was, too! Dr. Orth saw Tommy this mornin' at the hospital and he has arranged for that nice Dr. Eaton to operate soon—Dr. Orth is going away for a year, he says. An' its God's blessin', for he's the sick man!"

June leaned down over the fifth Perkins, who was in her lap while she trimmed her ragged locks into a smart Buster Brown cut. There was a thrumming in her ears and she pressed her lips to the little golden head she had just shampooed.

She had won, then! And he was going.

The rest of the day, and the days that followed, were a dream. She knew that she was working and talking and acting naturally, but the woman who had been listening for the message out of the storm was now watching, waiting, in immeasurable thankfulness and dumb suffering.

At last he came to the little cabin and stood looking down at her with his strange, steady gaze. It was, she knew, "the parting of the ways" and in silence she gathered the two skilled, quiet hands against her breast and held them there, while she looked at his face with aching eyes. She must remember its every line—the mask-like repression and just the way the soul of the man, at long intervals, pressed through with its wonderful grave sweetness, softening the grey mask into warm humanness.

She must remember, because already she had learned the baffling trick memory had of recording minute de-

tails of unimportant things, and at the same time failing miserably in others that colour all life.

Turning the left hand on hers, she bent and pressed her lips to the palm for a long time, fighting back the sick despair that was overwhelming her, trying to hold herself sane and still for the time left to her to see him, to hold him, the man, before he should become just the memory.

The colour was drained out of her face with the torture of it, when she at last lifted her head. Her eyes reached up to his with a prayer in which the agony of all that had been, of all that was to come, seemed centred. The Destiny that had brought them together was now putting them apart—and yet life must go on.

Something of this she saw in his eyes. Through the stoic-calm of a life of long and stern discipline, a soul human and starved looked out, and to it she cried in sudden and great bitterness—"Say that you care!"

"June, I do!"

His hands twisted around hers tightly—the lips, iron-locked, spoke at last and the two, primal man and primal woman, put from them, for the crucial moment that held in it the finality and pain of Death itself, the lesser gods.

With bruised arms she had beaten against barricades —ancestry, church, social code—the gods brutal and false that would hold from her that which her soul had striven for through long travail. And on the edge of despair, the barricades had sullenly yielded.

Night was at hand, but the ineffable splendour of sunset swept its glory into her white face. The lode-star had not been in vain—there was a God back of the plan——.

In silence he bent over her and she felt his lips on hers.

CHAPTER FIFTY-SIX

THE City was warm with the heat of midsummer. Its pavements were sluiced from corner hydrants, its scantily clothed youth frolicked gladsomely in the generous shower and its horses stepped daintily into the spray and inhaled its coolness into hot and dusty nostrils.

Evening tempered the heat agreeably and in June Ferriss's apartment on the seventh floor it was cool. A breeze blew through the open windows, and in her living room the moonlight flooded the bay window, its serene loveliness undisturbed by two shaded candles on an old mahogany writing desk.

A couch drawn across one side of the bay, and the low easy wicker chairs, were all covered with chintz in subdued colourings. Boxes of mignonette in the window gave their perfume to the little vagrant puffs of air that played with the casement curtains.

June Ferriss in a thin and very simple gown of white, half lay across the pile of cushions on the couch, her elbows sunk in the down and her chin on her interlaced fingers. From where she lay she could look down on the myriad lights of the City, vivid and scintillant, and up to the hushed calm of many stars, very old and austerely aloof from the tinsel brilliance of the little whirling planet.

Presently she heard Nora admit a guest and, without changing her position, she looked around with a little smile of greeting in her eyes.

The man who entered pulled a chair into the bay, stretched himself out in it with a tired sigh and with a

brief—"With your permission!"—lighted a cigar. Under her languidly lowered lids she looked at the flecks of crimson across his face, evident even in the moonlight, against the pallor of heat and weariness.

Rising quietly she brought a little squat bottle of Indian workmanship from her desk, and from it dabbled some lavender water on her handkerchief. Then she leaned on the back of his wicker chair and slowly patted the cool and damply fragrant linen over his temples and face.

He closed his eyes and the hand holding the cigar dropped inertly on the chair arm. Slowly, monotonously, the little cool touches moved over his face, brushing down over his eyelids very lightly, pausing on the temples, where the veins were knotted, with steady pressure, passing gently down over cheek and chin and throat.

Presently, with a long breath, he drew the cool fingers to his lips. When he released them, she went quietly back to her cushions. Then he laid aside his cigar and leaned forward, his elbows on his knees, his hands clasped.

"You are an odd woman, *Altesse.* You are very gentle, restful, and yet——"

Her gaze withdrew a little reluctantly from the night sky and turned to his meditatively. It was a strong face she looked at—the face of Henry A. Calhoun, lawyer. It was the face of a man who would have power and who would use it perhaps none too gently.

The chin was square, the mouth firm and a little cruel —the cruelty of power that uses the weaker for his tools, while indifferently contemptuous of their weakness.

Henry Calhoun had declined judgeships and other elective offices. His broad shoulders always shook off the yoke of party. He was a political power, but he used the party instead of the party using him.

In that indeterminate age between forty and fifty years, he was unmarried. Very few women interested him. The rest he classed with the non-voting citizens—the children and idiots.

June Ferriss waited in silence, and after a contemplative pause he continued—"And yet your gentleness covers paradoxical qualities that are hard to classify. You are at once a rebel and a prig. You have extraordinary good sense and yet you are an extremist."

His straight, heavy brows drew together over his strongly chiselled nose, and he looked down into her calm eyes frowningly.

"You are always going against the current. And the crocks and jars floating down bruise you. Why don't you float with them and manipulate them into the shoals and eddies you wish to use them in? That is strategy and strategy is the easiest way. You have brains. Brains always mount on the shoulders of the crocks, and use the clumsy jars for stepping stones. Why break your heart and your strength going against them?"

"Is the way they are going always the right way?" she asked.

"Make them think it is and switch them into your way. That is what brains are given us for. There will always be the mob and the few who own the mob, body and soul. Whether it is the Czar of all the Russias or Gompers—they have to be owned by somebody. If you don't own your own mob, some one else will. You are trying to teach them to think. They can't think. They can only feel. You are trying to show them how to go it alone. They don't want to. They hate a master, but they want one.

"The mob recognises its own limitations just enough to know what it lacks and to hate Intelligence. But

Intelligence can be its master and they will obey it as long as they are kept under the whip. You can't make analysts out of the bovine type. You only teach them enough to make them restless. And you are wasting your time."

"Almost thou makest me to believe!"

He watched the faint, baffling smile that came into her eyes—the smile that he could never fathom to his entire satisfaction.

"Your glittering generalities are very convincing. Generalities always are. So is circumstantial evidence. But they do not prove anything, do they?"

Twisting a little, she stretched her arms out across the cushions and lifted her head, facing him.

"I have watched you with your juries. I have watched you play upon them and make them see your word-paintings in just the colours and lines you wanted them to. And I always admired the artistry. But I know the artist, you see."

Reaching over to her desk, she drew one of the candles closer and picked up a magazine. A dagger of hammered metal was marking a place.

"This is an article on Mob rule. Le Bon takes the People *en bloc* as you do.—'Le Bon has the greatest contempt for the crowd, for the people.' " she read. " 'Democracy is the anonymous tyranny—more terrible, more vindictive, more vengeful than any absolute monarchy, where a head or heads may be reached with a bomb.

'Democracy is the divinisation of Opinion, and Opinion is always a Caligula.

'The Crowd is the hydra that the Strong Man, the Superior Man, must either slay or cajole—or be slain by it. There is no incompetency like the incompetency of the majority.

'There is no ignorance equal to mob ignorance.

'The great masses of mankind have not even risen to the level of being good servants. They have never learned the first step that points to dominion—service.

'Born to be graceless flunkeys, the People aspire to Olympus.

'Holding within themselves the seed of every tyranny, every absurdity, every hypocrisy, every diabolism, every form of slavery, they seek, by amalgamating and a closer herding, the miracle of transfiguration.

'Bottom believes that million million Bottoms will make him one of the elect. Vox populi, vox Dei!—was there ever a greater libel on the Lord!

'Democracy, which is the aspiration to mediocrity, must always fail, because there is a psychological hierarchy as well as a physical, geological and æsthetic hierarchy. Bad worships Better, and Better is enamoured of Best.

'This is written in the tissues and the corpuscles of man.

'Democracy must always fail because man is a religious animal—he worships instinctively what is above him—that which equals him has no power over him.

'A democracy begins to totter at the very moment it seems to be successful. The great undertow toward the concrete ruler is felt.'"

"Well?"

"Well, I influence people," she said slowly. "And because I do, I try to put myself in the witness stand occasionally and find out just what motive is behind the influence I am using at that particular time. You mass the mob, and you concede that your motive is power. Your power is not necessarily evil, but it is power just the same. It tightens the manacles. While I——"

She relaxed a little among the cushions and leaned her head against the high back of the couch.

"I separate the mob and see the individuals. And I find the individuals are pretty much the same there as those on what we call the higher plane. Oh, I see their faults! I have no illusions. But their littlenesses and meannesses and evil passions are no worse than ours after all. They are only cruder, rougher. And we have less excuse, have we not?"

"On the principle that knowledge is a sort of suit of chain mail against the passions? If our Heavens are higher, our Hells are deeper!"

"But our Heavens *are* higher, you see," she quietly insisted. "And our intelligence is an advantage because through it we see consequences. The poor, stumbling mob does not. It only sees the affair of the moment. Women of our class do not become common women. Beyond the gold and glitter they see the consequences and it is not moral training that keeps them decent—it is their good taste. The life of a common woman would be as offensive and impossible as an unclean bath. And because there is no appeal for us in that sort of life, I do not see where we may claim any great credit for keeping out of it.

"But there are women of my class who are profligate—who are wanton, but cautious! They revel in 'affairs' and skim along the edge of dishonour. They give rein to their passions up to a certain point, and because both caution and cowardice keep them from passing that point, they call themselves virtuous. Are they? What is virtue? Are these women of Society who deny themselves nothing but the actual crossing of the Rubicon, better than the grey-lived little drudge whose young man is too poor for marriage and who drifts where her shabby little romance beckons?

"You and Le Bon revel in your glittering generalities,

and you are very epigrammatic and clever, and your kind of people think it clever to agree with you. But that is where you and Le Bon prostitute your talent. Cleverness is not truth. This mob that you despise is of all grades and conditions, just as are the people of our class. We are no better than they are. We are only better bred. They are no worse than we are. They are only more ignorant. I know them personally, girls and women, boys and men. You don't. They do not interest you and you leave them and their problems to your underlings. And then you polish your wit upon them and Le Bon writes epigrams.

"I don't, because I have lived among them. I would have the right to denounce, because I would speak with authority. Your kind has not the right. Your attitude is dishonest and your epigrams are untrue."

Henry Calhoun listened to the languid, dispassionate voice as it quietly picked up and riddled his opinions—opinions listened to with respect and deference as those of a legal luminary and a political power, by persons and personages of the big world where history is made. The long, hot day in offices where great issues held him prisoner to the City, had fagged him, and as the molten ball of brass setting angrily in the West sent its last fierce rays across his desk, his thought kept reaching out to the quiet woman who never failed him when his nerves twanged viciously. She always rested and at the same time stimulated him. She opposed him in some of the political plays, she disagreed with him on many subjects, she knew when her presence and silence rested him, and when his restless brain was again ready for battle.

This psychic understanding, this sixth sense, brought him to her eagerly and held him—while she flouted him with her cool disdain and tranquil impertinences—de-

voutly thanking his gods for her quiet nearness and delicate elusiveness.

Now he leaned forward with his hand on the couch beside her head, the strong, muscular arm in its white flannel close to her cheek.

"How much longer are you going to waste all that on the *hoi polloi?*" he asked. "Because it is wasted, you know. I want you. I have wanted you ever since that night two years ago that I met you at the Keiths'. You are giving your brain and your strength to our brethren of the 'submerged tenth' and you try not to know that they do not thank you. You try to see them as you wish they were, not as they are. Your own caste are not angels, but they do not drain you and then turn upon you as is the pleasant little habit of the mob. I do not need to remind you of Christ and Savonarola and Lincoln and the rest. Human nature does not change. You can't make it over and your battling upstream doesn't take you far nor help many of the crocks. I want you. Give this up and come back to me—to your own people. I want you!——"

The voice that she had listened to as it held thousands silent in great convention halls—the voice that "carried" with ease to far galleries and that played with the emotions of audiences with masterful finish—softened wonderfully, its very note of confident and cruel power giving the tenderness that now pleaded a dangerous charm.

"I want you, June. I want you with me where the effort is worth while. The factories and the mills and the sweatshops have their agitators. They want red fire and rioting, spread-eagle oratory and torch-lights. You are as high above all that as the stars are above their cheap sky-rockets. They use you and exhaust you, and when you are broken they will forget you. We love

you, we who are your own people. Come back to us—with me, sweet!"

The white flannel coat sleeve was against her cheek and the superb vitality of the man played around her in magnetised waves. For two years he had steadily opposed her work and fought down her arguments with his virile logic.

With him were ranged James Ferriss and his wife and her friends. The few whose sympathies were with her were hurried, harassed and tired people—people who gave themselves heart and soul to the superhuman task of trying to better conditions for the treadmill hordes, and who were swayed and crowded and deafened by a class bewildered and incoherent, suspicious and ready always for panic-flight.

Thanklessness and worse they met with, the little band who strove to protect and lead. Their teachings were misquoted and their acts criticised and their motives sneered at. Treachery gnawed at their enthusiasm and malice sickened their zeal. The failures loomed large and shouted from the housetops, while the successes were nebulously indistinct and were unheard in the clamour. The harvest was huge and the workers few and lonely.

For the children she laboured most, and they hurt her least. The parents, lethargic where not possessed of greed, blocked her and resented what she did. But this she ignored, and she worked through a dozen channels to reach the legislative machinery and to clog its work of evil.

Out of this came sinister warning and open threat. Peter Pan was seized upon as a weapon and the story of his birth distorted into a dozen ugly forms.

Among the lower orders the avid taste for the mys-

terious and scandalous revelled in whispered gossip and sidelong look at the sturdy boy who visited them, and at the palely quiet woman whose tired gaze rested on them so oddly at times.

Among the higher, the method was more refined, but the evil interpretation only the more cruel. All this she accepted without protest. It disturbed her as little as the wreckage that thrashes viciously against the sea-gazing cliff. Her vision reached beyond, to the vast perspectives into which dead generations had withdrawn, out of which myriads of children were trooping. They were as innumerable as the stars, these child-women and child-men, whirling like star-grain down into the great mill whose iron jaws gaped for their baby strength and baby limbs.

And out of their bartered childhood the ranks of the "Submerged" were recruited—the blinded, suspicious and distorted souls whom the mother of her yearned over, even while they turned upon her the barbed arrows of benefits forgot.

She had given of herself and she was very tired. She had not known for long years what it was to be rested. Dr. Carl and Kate had given her up in despair, and in her mirror she saw a face filled with weary shadows. Had she not done her share, after all? Why not now quietly step back and down from it all, take her boy among his own class, and give over her storm-driven bark to arms strong and eager to shield?

To-morrow the heat and dust and strife—the heart-breaking effort, the inevitable failures, the uncertain fruitage! And she was so tired—heart and soul and body.

"To go back—that would mean to the big waters——" She was murmuring in a monotonous little sing-song,

her eyes closed, her head settling back against the quietly powerful arm that braced it. "It would mean the delicate things—soft lights and exquisite music; flowers, narcissus and mignonette and valley lilies; and cultured voices and pleasantness, shelter and idleness and—peace——"

He looked down at the slenderly inert figure, its white draperies touched with misty moonlight—at the satin-smooth coils of dark hair against his sleeve, at the whimsical little smile that wavered over the tired droop of the mouth. He had been patient, and he was not a patient man. But she was tiring, as was inevitable, and the battle was to the strong.

He stooped over her, his lips on her throat.

"It would mean, and will mean more, when I take you out of this Gehenna to the sea. I will bring you back ready to be one of the Inner Council—to play a game worthy your intelligence, *Altesse.*"

When she was alone she moved restlessly about the room, then went back to the couch and lay there very still, looking down at the City that hummed uneasily all night long. Did it want her very much, after all? Did it care? The tide had slowly turned in favour of the children—the Public had been reached and stirred into action at last, and in this she had played her little part. So now she could yield to the exhaustion that tugged at her and clamoured for rest.

Two years since Henry Calhoun had first bent over her hand in his easy, masterful way and had drawn it through his arm to lead her to the table at the Keiths' dinner-dance. In his arms after, with the sweet old witchery of a Strauss waltz quickening the pulse, she had acknowledged the charm of this man who was such a

distinct and finished product of his own world and time.

Coolly cynical, frankly egotistic, courteously compelling, he controlled people and affairs with an absence of effort almost insolent in its invariable and calm success. And the maturity of her womanhood paid its homage to a masterful mind that she could respect if not always with approbation.

But at the dinner-dance the waltz-strains had followed them out to the terrace of the Keiths' summer home. And while she had listened to the masterful tones of the man who was studying her with his cruelly clever eyes, the little weary voice that seemed to beat like a bird with broken wings in her inner consciousness was crying for that other, the man of brief speech and long, long thought!——

And so, as the months crept by, the little voice followed her to stifling tenement, to sordidly repulsive sweatshop, as it followed her to the gracious homes of her own kind. He had come back from his world-encircling mission and due honours had been paid him. And his hospital work had again claimed him, its chief, now renewed in strength and playing his game of life and death with even finer skill.

But a few miles apart, their paths had not again crossed, though the others of their circles had seen him at intervals.

And so—was that the end? With her arms stretched out across the cushions, her hands clasped tightly, she looked down at the unsleeping City, with its myriad souls and myriad sorrows. The pain of her own heart was, after all, the pain of all that suffered there under that sea of dark roofs. They were groping, seeking, crying for companionship, huddling close for comfort, from the rat-faced Yeggman with his crime-wise girl-mistress,

to the man whose gold swayed kingdoms across the sea and the weary-eyed patrician wife his gold had bought.

They were lonely! With sardonic humour Destiny herded them together in one million, two, three—swarming in soul-stifling confusion. And out of that fearful, struggling mass there steadily boiled the green froth of crime bred of loneliness!

> "—Out of senseless Nothing to provoke
> A conscious Something to resent the yoke
> Of unpermitted Pleasure, under pain
> Of Everlasting Penalties, if broke!"

And how few, how pitifully few, came into their own! "How lonely is every one," cried Carlyle. "In this great charnel of the universe!"

Calhoun would give her the companionship of an exceptional mind, interests that would be weighty and absorbing, her part to play in the great game of statecraft and the influence of his dominating personality to keep from her all that could injure or offend. He was the valued friend of her people and her friends, and they were waiting with eager confidence for an outcome of the two-year *camaraderie* that they considered inevitable.

She closed her eyes and felt the warmth of his lips on her throat, the vibration of power that reached to her from the muscular arm where her head rested. They had been splendid, satisfying friends, jeering with comfortable impertinence at each other's hobbies and theories, appealing to each other's quick understanding for the double enjoyment of a clever phrase, a bar of music, a sunset across mysterious waters.

All this had meant much and had helped her, as a counter influence, through the labours and wearing anxie-

ties that tried her often to the breaking point. But with this he was no longer content.

Opening her eyes, she looked up, beyond the electric-sharp glare of the city lights, to the remote, ages-old stars, dim and austerely indifferent. Their serenity looked down in still rebuke at the "fitful fever" of life's little day. Behind them slept the great Question. Their antiquity dwarfed either pain or prize that Life might give. Their beacon-light, burning across the graveyard of centuries, was an earnest of things so vast that imagination faltered and failed before them.

Looking down upon the City, the wearied human cried for the flesh-pots, for the easy content of Lesser Things.

But always the dumb oratory of the signs that illumined the Heavens drew the spirit back to its questing of the Supreme. To the untranslatable rhythm the soul responded, as to the sonorous, irregular majesty of a Gregorian chant.

And June Ferriss, lifting the clasped hands, held the little thread of gold against her lips. It was the tangible thing that held her when the flesh was weak. She had sought the lode-star, stumbling through the swamp-fires that bewildered, following the *ignis fatuus* that flared and then flickered out. And after many days she had been given her desire.

The two years lifted as a curtain, and with sudden, poignant reality she was back in the little cabin among the hills. The coldly pitiless voice laid upon her its seven-thonged whip, but under its burning lash her spirit had crept on its knees, inch by inch, toward its temple. It was the final, crucial passage of her long Way of Pain—the Sancta Scala up which she must climb, kneeling, to the curtained Host.

And it had not been in vain.

With arms out-flung to the night, she cried out to him: *"John Orth! John Orth!"*

The City faded like a mirage—the myriad-pointed firmament wheeled close, and there was the rushing of a winged host—of those who had loved and had plucked a rose out of the pit of Hell.

Out of the white fire of suffering her eyes had reached to him, and he had answered them. Heaven and Earth had rolled away like a scroll, and they stood alone, man and woman, between the two eternities. With his lips on hers, Life had written its ultimate "Ave et vale!" The bitterness of years fell from them, the sweetness reached only by those who have known the crucible, distilled its keen wine through chilled soul and body; their senses swung dizzily to the crashing music of the spheres.

The rose of a moment plucked from Life's Hell!

"But memory gives it back to me—the imperishable rose—beloved!—my beloved, my beloved!——"

Shaken by the remembered sweetness of it, she crouched on the cushions, watching for the miracle painting—the coming of the dawn. Close to the edge of the world a great star burned steadily.

CHAPTER FIFTY-SEVEN

THROUGH the furnace heat of August Mrs. James Ferriss descended upon the City, upon her comely countenance wrath and determination writ large.

"Not that Jimmy Ferriss or I care a whoop if you are picked up unconscious in some tenement that smells to Heaven and are stuffed in some frowsy police ambulance for the City Hospital," she explained grimly to her step-daughter as the latter hugged her ecstatically. "But Peter Pan fusses for his mother and refuses to be comforted, though I tell him daily that I am very much nicer and do not consider it my Christian mission in life to keep my friends miserable. Jimmy Ferriss says if I come back without you he will get three divorces. You are the usual thankless type of step-daughter, and I don't see where I have any call to care anything about you. But I am still soft on Jimmy. Therefore, you go back with me to the Island dead or alive."

The indefatigable physician, browned healthily by the Island's outdoor life and breezes, rattled on about the Island events, the prize-winners in the aquatic sports, the new bungalows and the addition to the club-house.

But her shrewd gaze was scanning the white face, grown perceptibly thinner, and the still radiance of the heavily shadowed eyes, that smiled affectionately and gladly back at her over the little brass tea-kettle. What her professional training read there made her distinctly snappish and she proceeded to carry things with a high hand.

The result was that June found herself put to bed by her step-mother and the volubly thankful Nora.

"Sure an' it's the God's blessin' that you came, Mrs. Jim, darlint!" the latter reiterated tearfully. "She would shtay here in this bilin' hole an' it wuz killin' her fast. But I could do nawthin' with her, she's that set!"

"Well, I am going to do something with her," replied Mrs. Jim with ominous calmness. "And by that same token you may ring for the janitor, Nora, and we will pack. Get her trunks and yours."

And so it was that June Ferriss found herself back again on the Island that had known her girl joys and life of Arcadian *dolce far niente.* It was a woman that came back—worn, tried, wiser and very patient. And the woman found that Time had not stood still, even where the quiet round of the seasons seemed the only thing that could vary or disturb the Island's changefully changeless calm.

The homes and the tents and the lagoons were much the same, but death and marriage and the kaleidoscopic shifting of circumstance and condition had altered the personnel of the Island colony. But a few, a very few, of the old friends were there to greet her. And the stern, inexorable law of change had worked its will among the happy little coterie who had been her familiars, leaving her almost alone, almost an alien, in what had once been home.

Her father and Kate, happy with each other, were content with the newer arrivals and promptly affiliated themselves with the existing order. June, yielding to their persuasions, joined in the old round of Island occupations. But the verve had gone out of her—the old,

easy charm of light labours and lazy amusements had vanished.

In their place was a thankfulness for the peace and loveliness of wide skies and far-reaching waters, for the luminous dawns and splendid sunsets, for the pleasant courtesies of cultured people and the absence of discomfort and harshness. But she found herself slipping away from the people to the quiet of a book in a sheltered corner of the breakwater—a book, and her dreams.

The boat-landing was always a place of interest to the Islanders. The big, turtle-shaped side-wheelers would paddle in with much churning of waters and sounding of hidden bells, and the City crowds would press to the railings to look down at the fleet of canoes that floated like lazy butterflies on the little waves glittering in the sunlight.

June Ferriss, keeping her light craft steady with an occasional dip of the paddle, would drift close to the landing in obedience to significant signals from other Islanders. Then they would all turn to gaze in pained surprise at a disturbance in one of the canoes, where two or three of the boys, clad airily in racing togs, were plunged in a heated argument that promised battle, murder and sudden death.

Just as the long-suffering crew of the turtle-ferry was marshalling its crowd into order for the gang-plank, the dispute would reach its climax, there would be a terrible lunge, a wild flopping of the frail bark, a shriek of horror from the ferry crowd and a groan as the little craft turned over and the angry occupants disappeared beneath the waters.

The exasperated ferry-hands would shake their fists

at the wet heads that bobbed serenely to the surface, while muscular arms flashed through the water in long, scientific strokes, deftly righted the canoe and then towed it ashore. Then the boys would smile like cherubs up at the profane members of the crew and murmur reproachfully—"Naughty! naughty!"

After one of these tragic accidents, June, smiling amusedly at the nonsense, was turning away, when a Mrs. Trevor thrust out her own paddle and checked her.

"Wait, June Ferriss! Who is that splendid-looking man on the upper deck? He knows you, because he has been looking at you and smiling, while those pests of boys were making those shrieking women faint. Promise that you'll bring him over to the Lodge to-night, or I'll duck you!" She added viciously, "Promise, you cat!"

June laughed as she swept her canoe to safety with a deep stroke of the paddle.

"I'll pray over it!" she called back gaily to the pretty matron who threatened her. "But I don't think I'll let you have him, Kitty Trevor. I want him myself."

Five minutes later Mrs. Trevor managed to flash at her laughing friend a pair of indignant blue eyes which she skilfully changed to a gaze of demure approval at her friend's passenger, sitting very much at his ease in the bow of June's canoe.

"That is Mrs. Frank Trevor," June explained, as she paddled easily toward the lagoon that led home. "She ticketed you as worth knowing and promised dire things if I did not take you over to Trevor Lodge to-night."

"Spare her her illusions a little longer," begged Henry Calhoun charitably. "Life has so few. Also, I came here—uninvited—to tell you a few things and a City

yearns for my return. Like Antony, I saw you disappear and I turned my ships."

June shook her head regretfully. "It sounds well, dear Antony. But your secretary phoned for a reservation on the Bankers' Train and you lunched in the diner *de luxe* and the leather case over your heart is filled with Bock Panetelas. And the City will pant patiently in the heat till you return to tell the Lord Mayor and his Cabinet when to turn thumbs up or thumbs down."

"Same thing," replied Mr. Calhoun calmly. "Mark left the seat of war to convey certain information to the lady of the Nile and so did I. This happens to be a lagoon instead, but it's just as wet and there will be the same moon over it to-night when I tell you things. We wear bifurcated garments instead of a toga, but we wear our hearts in the same place and we love just as hard."

He selected a cigar with care from the leather case she had mentioned, held his straw hat for a shield when he lighted it, studied it till he saw that it drew evenly, then returned his keen, rather cruel regard to the woman kneeling in the stern.

"You sneaked away, you know," he remarked calmly.

June drew her paddle carefuly out of some entangling lily-pads and laughed down at him.

"Kidnapped," she corrected gaily. "Kate did it, and what can one do when a relentless step-mother takes the law into her own hands and makes a fuss about things? The call of duty simply went a'glimmering, and behold me a lotus-eater."

"And not before it was needed," he added with a note of grimness. "You are very stubborn, you know, and this idea of yours that you must seek other spheres than your own to be of use, is all wrong, if you could only

readjust your mental attitude and see that it is. Your influence is just as valuable among your own kind, and infinitely more worth while. We do not keep our great financier counting pennies into little bags and adding rows of figures in a ledger. We give him lesser minds who are able to do the drudgery for him. You have no business among the treadmill throng—they crush you among them. Your place is with me, where you can plan, direct, control."

The sun had sunk behind the distant city line across the bay and the after-light made a nimbus around her head. Her paddle rested idly across the canoe in front of her and the little craft drifted slowly with the slow current of the lagoon.

Calhoun dropped his cigar into the water and leaned forward, his elbows on his knees and his well-shaped, powerful hands clasped. His gaze, insistent, compelling, held hers that smiled protestingly back at him.

"You are counting pennies into little bags, you know. You accomplish a little, but how much? How far does your influence reach? How many do you affect? For the vitality you give out, what do you reap in results? Do they need you, after all, as much as you think they do, these of the struggling hordes with whom you seek to cope? If they are worth anything, will they not work out their own salvation? And if they are not worth anything, can you do anything for them?"

The fascination of indomitable will, of implacable power, reached—held her. Calm, resistless resolve wrapped him as in a coat of steel mail. In Calhoun she saw the qualities that her mind craved, that her soul paid full and eager deference to. While her intelligence responded to the splendid intelligence of this man whose name stood so high in Statecraft that he could afford to

brush lightly aside as immaterial the proffered honours of office, so, too, the languor of body that tense years had laid upon her, lured her now to the abounding strength and masculinity that offered its arms to her.

"I have succeeded," he was saying to her, with the quiet recognition of his own ability that rose above the pretence of any question as to its achievements. "And beyond that succeeding there is still success. I am going on. What of you? When you crumple up and the brutalities close over you in waves that stifle and obliterate, what then? With the same flag floating above us, is it to be the stars for me, the stripes for you?"

The after-glow of day was retreating before the phantom-dusk that trailed grey garments in from the swift-darkening waters of the lake. The lagoons were turning from bronze to ebony, and the rushes and reeds leaned their dark sword-like blades together in sibilant rustling, as the chill of coming night swept in fitful breaths across the Island.

June Ferriss felt the vague coldness of that coming night gather around her heart, as she felt the undeniable verity of the calmly dispassionate words that painted in pitiless black and white what life now held for her and its promise of what was to come.

Silently they drifted to the little boat-landing, from where gaily welcoming voices hailed them.

"Kitty Trevor phoned a detailed and vivid description from the Lodge," Mrs. Ferriss called to them. "So we knew it was you, Henry C. They want us over there to-night, but I told them you belonged to the family, and besides, you didn't come to the Island to play bridge and pool."

"She is going to look after your morals and your pocket-book, Calhoun!" Mr. Ferriss assured him as he

steadied the canoe while they stepped out on the landing. "But never mind—we have a little wagon-buffet on the porch stocked with ice and things, and you and June can spoon in the moonlight, and Luna promises to outdo herself to-night."

True to their word, Ferriss *père* and his good wife carried themselves away to their own apartments at an early hour, while Calhoun scorned the big, comfortable porch, after all, and took June down to the sands. There a piece of wreckage made a comfortable seat.

"You may as well be comfortable, because I came here to give you a talking to," Calhoun explained.

June pulled her soft white shawl close under her chin and leaned back lazily.

"Talking to's sound too serious for such a wonderful night," she protested. "Tell me some pleasant things. Look at that wonderful moon and that shining pathway it sends across the water to us. How often do we look at it and know that it *is* wonderful? What does that Titanic massing of molten colours in the West at the day's end say to us generally? Is it a miracle that we look at with awe, silent before its stupendous beauty? Or does it just suggest the end of a work-day and the odour of dinner! What barbarians we are, after all—dress, tasks, habits. Look at us and our fashion grotesqueness—our mincing, mannequin freakiness that we stupidly give ourselves to, with all the grace and loveliness of Greek tradition pleading with us for the lost loveliness of simple things, of long, gracious folds, of dignity in colour and adornment, of quietness, of restraint!"

"It is the age of the shriek and the siren-whistle, my dear," replied Calhoun. "Women do not dress for the loveliness of simply lovely raiment. God bless us, no!

They dress to be stared at. And each has sought to out-Herod Herod till she has attained her own individual shout. And the result of the aggregate bears the same relation to beauty as the circus calliope of sacred childhood memory does to music. But I did not come here to talk about modern women. There are some irate persons in the City who are stirring things in the political Endor-pot, who do not think I should be here at all, and they are quite right. I have to go back to-morrow on the Bankers' Special and the *de luxe* diner that you were unkind enough to jeer about, when I tried to make you understand that I was ready to swim any modern Hellespont that might present itself. You are worth some extra exertion, you know. That's why I am not in the City with my good friends who are now making unparliamentary remarks about me. And—I want to talk about you."

He smoked in silence for a little, then tossed the cigar into the surf that foamed silkily up to the edge of the half-buried wreck, and, lifting one foot to the rotting wood, he leaned forward with his elbow on his knee.

The posture was a familiar one of Orth's, and June closed her eyes for a sick moment. Ah, the pictures of him that her heart hoarded—counted over in her life's silence as the devotee kneeling in the church darkness tells her beads!

She put the thought of him from her with an effort that seemed almost physical. Calhoun's keen, resolute eyes were on her face, cameo-clear in the moonlight, and a little desperately she turned and looked up at him.

"Yes!—well, go on!——" There was a tremor in her voice, something of wildness in the gaze that lifted swiftly, and then steadied, in the masterful steadiness of his. The mournful, irregular tolling of the buoy-

bell out near the reefs came fitfully over the waters. It seemed to her tired of pain, of the sorrow of its dirge of drowned things. And so she to-night shrank in sick cowardice from the long pain of loving.

Why not let go, put from her this misery of longing that throbbed like a twisted nerve through the warp and woof of life? To let go, and be loved as this man beside her—cool, cynical, dominating—could love! Why not?

"Have these clean, sane breezes taught you things?" His voice was quietly matter-of-fact, and the nerves that quivered and tugged madly at the enforced calm of her bearing, responded gratefully to the cool, powerful touch that had the healing gentleness that only power can have. Her breast stirred with the soft, broken sigh of a child that has cried itself to sleep; her body relaxed down all its languid length. His gaze held hers, and the superb confidence of the man, that curbed his own passion with as iron a will as it controlled the passions of his followers, comforted her with its sense of absolute safety.

"With all your cleverness, you are obsessed. A little devil of perversity is playing havoc with your good sense. You insist upon the martyr-rôle, in a day when martyrdom is no longer necessary, nor even recognised when it is seen. Our taxes pay for our organisations, which take care of the problems you fret about much better than you can. Your giving your body to the lions isn't going to do any material good. Evolution takes time. These people you travail over must grow. You can't pull them up. And they don't suffer half as much as you think they do. In fact, they are in many respects much happier than we are. Their joys are far more plentiful and much cheaper. You are tuned like a Stradivarius. But the violin strings whose ecstasy and pain

vibrate to every softest breath of the Master, would snap under the rough grasp of those you think need pity.

"There is an inexorable law of Breed. The stratum you labour over has its good strain, of course—its rough honesty and patience and dogged perseverance.

"But with these, who do not need you because they are strong and decent, are others who use you till your interests clash with theirs and who will then promptly turn and rend you. That is the mongrel breed, my stubborn friend. It has the common wolf-cowardice that hunts in packs. It knows as much of honour as it does of Sanscrit, as much of gratitude as it does of Homer. It fawns over your outstretched hand while the poison of envy and malice is hot in its vitals, and when it thinks it is safe, it sinks its teeth in your heel."

"Don't——!"

He smiled at the sharp cry.

"I am not telling you anything new," he reminded her calmly. "All that isn't my discovery. The law of Breeding is as old as the world. You can't change it with sentiment. Your strong and decent stock is honest—what you do for them they pay back again with their genuine gratitude and genuine affection. Your vulgarian hates you for the very use it makes of you, because it hates anything that has and is what it can never have nor be. It hates you because of what you represent. And as it cannot emulate, it attacks. And all this that I am telling you is what you have already found out. Be honest—admit it!——"

She was staring out over the glimmering, splendid path of silver that stretched across the restless waters. That was what he stood for—a path that awaited her of beauty; of restless, vital power; of splendid accom-

plishment. While back there in the City, the long dusty road——

"In the City——" He picked up her thought with uncanny certainty. "You plunge into problems that call merely for dray-horse strength. Why waste the delicate *finesse* of Cabinets on matters that belong to police matrons? Why give over your personality and your sensibilities to the mercy of those beneath you, any more than you would give your Ibsen and your Maeterlinck to them to deface and destroy in malice because they tell of things high and fine and inaccessible? And do you know why you have done these things, that your own reason told you were illogical? It was because you sought Nepenthe—you wanted forgetfulness of self—you gave of yourself to a hungry maw that a generation of your kind could not satisfy, because, in the final analysis, you wanted to shake off self, get rid of an Old Man of the Sea. You are uneasy, restless, and the flesh-pots of Egypt do not satisfy. So you turn from Egypt to the treadmill throng and try to lose yourself among them. But you can't, you know."

The level, dispassionate tones as they picked up and considered her work with unhurried deliberation, probed home into her consciousness with the sureness of an anti-toxic corrective. She felt helpless, futile. The thought of pleasanter paths, of the gracious things that would, if she permitted, shield her from so much that now chafed and injured her, had seemed a temptation that she put from her with a sense of shame. But Henry Calhoun always thrust her into a shaft of light that appeared to be cold reason and in which she was but a visionary, a sentimentalist.

She began to feel bewildered, unsure of herself, and

she flung out her hands with a touch of baffled despair and rose to her feet.

"What is truth!" she cried to him—the cry of Pilate that life never answers. "Am I trying to do the right thing?—or building with sand! Are you honest, I wonder?—or the clever diplomat bending me to your will? What are you?"

They faced each other in the white radiance of the "summer night's high noon" with the surf curling in a soft monotone of dreams at their feet.

The man stood erect before her, polished, successful, masterful product of his time and of his world. The eyes with their cruel, derisive regard of his generation in mass, now met the desperate, searching eyes of the woman with a sudden hardening of purpose, through which reached the swift flame of hidden fires.

Bending over her, he drew her to him, thrusting her head back and down against the hollow of his arm. His lips scorched on her eyes and then he laughed, his face close to hers, while mounting passion long held in leash sent a hot wave of crimson over the impassive face she had known.

"Truth?—good God! Is it truth, that I want to lift you from this blind immolation of all that I worship in you, on the altar of the herd? I would treasure you, you thing of white fire and mate for a strong man!

"You would be the high-priestess of my councils, the brain of the woman-sovereign to bend its fine intuition on matters that count. What are you doing now? Trying to make Damascene blades out of broadswords of pewter! Am I honest in wanting to lift you from this, to take you back to your own? What am I? What you see and what my record shows, and they both lie in the hollow of your hand. I am neither hero nor mission-

ary—I neither teach nor preach. I take man and material and condition as the world gives them and I act. I use them, mould them, and I climb—but I do not destroy—and they, too, the men who obey me, may climb if they will. And I want you with me, where you belong. Do you hear? I want you——".

Swift, imperious, the will of the man swept forward in a sudden passion of amaze that it should be thwarted now and for the first time, and that in the one desire that came to him as the fitting and gracious crown of all the others.

For June, lying passive in the arms that had closed around her roughly, was looking up at him with eyes that were remote, brooding—the look that he could not fathom.

Turning her hands so the palms were against his breast, she pressed him back, till his hands closed around her two elbows and he held her there—a Sphinx-question, still and white in the moonlight.

"Do you not see? We may be both partially right and partially wrong. That is where it is difficult to disentangle these troubled questions that life gives us." She smiled up at him wistfully. "I want to be fair. You mean a great deal to me. You mean almost everything, perhaps, but just—the one thing. Time and death take from us our old friends and the later years find us with the very few that we care for. So those few become dearer and closer as the horizon of our interest narrows. You——" She turned and looked over her shoulder for a long moment. The low monotone of the unresting waters, threaded with the haunting, insistent note of the bell, filled the night with its mystery.

"It is not easy to weigh one's own motives, is it? You represent everything that could tempt me to turn to the

things that are big and brilliant and splendid. Sometimes I want to turn to them—with you—very much. I want the absorbing interests that you could give me, the wider horizon, the *confrères* who are doing things that are weighty and fine. But what of your side of it? If I saw my way clear to go to you, because my life would be fuller and happier than it is now, would that be good sportsmanship? I care for you very much—but I know that it is in me to care more——"

His protests, impatient, resistless, swept through her sleepless brain in a lava-tide later, and she carried her wakefulness to a little balcony that was almost hidden under the vine-hung eaves over one of her bedroom windows. With a soft cloak twisted around her, over her nightgown, she crouched on the cushions of the balcony with her arms on the railing. The booming monotone of the waves crowding over the breakwater came to her like the solemn chanting in a great cathedral, and she lifted her face to the cold night wind gratefully.

The City and its warring claims had followed her to the Island. Her father had said, long before, that she could not escape from life even there. So now she found that the Island was the same, but she had changed. The girl had been content with its loveliness, with the charm of life in the open, with the elements that allured and dreamed to-day, and that woke to majestic rage and mad tempest to-morrow. But the woman had come back, beaten by the storms of life and aching with the hunger of life at its supremest—not to dream but to know, not to drift but to soar, straight as the eagle with eyes and breast turned full to the sun, to the full splendour of her desire.

And it was this unsleeping hunger that weakened her will so that the human woman of her pleaded for compromise, for the compensating warmth and nourishment of lesser things to still its craving.

At such moments the spirit of her—that uncanny other woman who was so austerely silent and yet so real—seemed to withdraw into her own region where she stood alone, on guard before a shrine.

The night and the voices of the sea brought the spirit woman closer. The shrine was real. There, like Moses, it had been given her to see her God, face to face. The glory of answered prayer had dazzled her eyes for a little while and then it had withdrawn itself into the mysteries.

And now? The years, long, empty and echoing, stretched out before her, an appalling vista of memory's torment and Tantalus-crying for the quiet hands that had lifted her soul to its golden throne, for the lips that had rested on hers for moments that held the Hymettus-sweetness that gods distil with jealous rarity. To remember this and to face the starved bleakness that held only its memory!

She cowered against the little railing with a broken moan, her dry lips hard against the narrow bit of metal on her clenched hand. Cold, pure, unyielding—such was the small symbol of gold, and such the high command of the love it represented.

Out of the warring temptations that engulfed her and dragged her down, she thrust her arms to the night and its hidden God.

"Ah, you who gave him to me, and who understand!—help me to be worthy, to be strong! Help me! God, God!—I want him so!——"

On her knees now, pagan unafraid!—she turned at

last to the God who had been "honest," who had given her her supreme desire, and to whom she must now pray for strength lest she prove unfit.

"The moments where there are just one's self and God"—of this he had spoken there among the hills, the sunset light falling across the wax-white weariness of his face, the slow, curbed tenderness of fettered years strangely sweet in his eyes.

And this moment had come to her, a moment in the night's darkest hour when the soul had reached its "dead, low tide." Neither creed that offered nor fear that threatened could reach her. But the love that must now be guarded as a sacred thing brought her on her knees at last to the Unseen who gave it.

Far out over the dark waters a dim glimmer paled the horizon-line. Lifting her head heavily from her arms, white, spent, June Ferriss watched the mysterious passing of the night. There was no glow of exaltation, no baptismal fervour of sudden-born regeneration. But it came to her what it meant to "become as a little child." God was not a stupendous and complex problem for science to explain. He was not to be "understood." But when the hour came when creed and philosophy alike were inadequate and the soul crumpled to its knees, then out of the void came the great calm of an unseen strength.

Of this the church tried to teach, but at the last the way must be travelled alone. In that hour there can only be "one's self and God."

Love had led her to where her strength saw the end of strength and weakness cried out for help. And over the great waters, held in the hollow of His hand, the Great Compassion that had waited with great patience, answered her. This was God.

Several weeks of the new and beautiful idleness passed uneventfully, and the wonderful breezes and the wonder-nights when the great canopy of stars seemed so close, smoothed the tiredness from her brow and tinged very gently the whiteness of her face. After luncheon one day while her step-mother frankly slept in one of the veranda hammocks, June slowly drifted in a canoe to the landing for the mail.

When she returned, Mrs. Jim was always ready to give and receive "news from the world." Letters and papers were the mild excitement that broke the pleasant monotony agreeably. And one day the doctor announced a long letter from Mrs. Robert Keith.

"They have gone to Ferncliff Inn, June. And Toots has written a whole village chronicle. I suppose you are only interested in the mill section, though!"

Mrs. Ferriss twisted herself luxuriously in the hammock, helped herself to a chocolate and gave herself up in appreciative absorption to Mrs. Keith's long and delightfully gossipy effusion.

June was sitting on the steps with her paddle lying across her lap. Her head was leaning against the pillar, her face concealed by the vines.

She listened with an air of lazy interest to the fragmentary bits of news that floated to her over the hammock edge. But her heart was struggling in slow, laboured beats that seemed to suffocate her, and that deepened the old relentless ache that was never absent—the unsleeping hunger of heart and soul for the one voice, the one presence, that peopled life richly, or left it desolated by its absence.

Name and incident issued mirthfully or musingly from somewhere in the depths of the gay scarlet and green network, and June Ferriss forced herself to comment

now and then on the news, though every sense seemed prostrate and crying for him; for the man who had quietly entered her life and in so doing had severed it into the only two periods that mattered—the former that had not know him, and the latter of which he was a part.

After a while her hands tightened suddenly on the paddle and her breath drew in sharply.

"Dr. Orth looks very different," Mrs. Ferriss read aloud. "His mission has given him a newer and bigger grip on life. Mrs. Orth contracted the suicidal habit again as soon as he returned, and that sort of thing is pretty awful as a steady performance. But he is a brick—and a wonder, that man! Bob and the Vances have arrived and I must powder my nose for dinner. Will 'reshume' in the morning."

Mrs. Ferris fluttered the sheets of paper and suddenly exclaimed "Good Lord!"

Pulling herself upright, her feet on the floor, she read in a queer, dry tone: "The close of my letter last night was uncanny. My dear, that unfortunate creature cried 'Wolf' once too often. She took the stuff during the night, not knowing that they had sent for the doctor and that he was in the hospital. They found her crouched on the floor in his study, in her nightgown and bathrobe. It was too late for the usual ghastly programme—pumps and emetics—and the curtain has rung down, thank God! on all that sordid bathos. *Requiescat in pace!* and praise the Powers for laggard mercy."

CHAPTER FIFTY-EIGHT

AUTUMN, golden and glorious, turned the Island into a succession of ever more beautiful pictures. For June, life seemed to have stopped. She obediently played her part in the daily round of importantly unimportant things, but thinking, feeling, seemed suspended and the other side of the dual woman clung to its old refuge, the breakwater, where the surf churned in its augustly solemn threnody and the little matters of life and death withdrew before its majestic significance.

And one evening when the cool of autumn gave excuse for a driftwood blaze in the fireplace, she slipped away from the little group before it. Twisting a big hooded cloak around her, she ran fleetly along the sands to where the great ledges of protecting rock reached out and thrust back the long, smooth swells that rose high and broke thunderously over them.

There the desperate hunger could reach out its wings to the vast mysteries, and to its pain was given a dignity that quieted the hurt.

Great dark argosies of cloud, silver-tinged, were moving in stately slowness across the sky, and now and then the moon looked serenely through. The wind had gone down with the sun and the angry protest of the baffled waters but accentuated the night's far-spreading calm.

With her arm and clasped hands in a cleft of the rock, she looked down at the turmoil boiling at her feet—the protest of all life at its stone barriers!

So had hers battled and fallen back upon itself, again

and again. But she had always battled on. Was it much that she had accomplished? Was it worth while? It had left her like a bruised sea-bird flattened against a crag.

But, ah, the crag was there! The still, strong soul toward which her soul's wings had beaten wearily through the night and storm, had risen at last from the sea.

There was a step on the shingle behind her. Turning, she saw her father and Kate walking slowly back toward the house, a big Scotch plaid over their heads and shoulders. Then she looked into the eyes whose slow, grave smile had lighted the little lamp in her heart's holy of holies—that had given to her seeking a religion —to her questioning a God.

John Orth came to her side with his quietly deliberate step. Leaning back against the black rocks, the moonlight adding its aura of silver to the silvered bands of dark hair that lay like a nun's coif around her head, her outstretched arms braced against the rough stone, June waited motionless.

Very gently he laid his wonderful, flexible surgeon-hands on each side of her face and looked deep into her eyes. Close to them the mighty waves reared and fell in a majestic epithalamium, the sonorous, splendid marriage chant of the waters. The great company of the stars wheeled close.

He drew her to him, breast, mouth, soul, there where the great wide freedom that she worshipped lifted a cathedral not builded with hands, to give its *benedictus*.

"Boy!" she whispered to the iron-locked lips grown tender, the terribly patient eyes grown richly impatient as passion answered to the *Gloria in Excelsis* of the sea. "Boy!—my beloved—ah, my beloved——!"

The dying wind billowed the folds of her Portia-cloak, then swept it around them like a royal mantle. For the delayed sweetness of it his lips touched lingeringly silvered coif and eyes in which her soul shone, then close and warm against hers, spoke the aching hunger of all life—"I love you, June Ferriss—I love you—I love you——"

Of the depths, the heights!

THE END

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